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Aristotle on Rhetoric and Rationality:
A Study of Aristotelian Political Psychology

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A Study of Aristotelian Political Psychology

by

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For Mijke and George

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Aristotle on Rhetoric and Rationality:
A Study of Aristotelian Political Psychology

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Abstract: This study explores Aristotle's political psychology, focusing on the lessons it teaches regarding the character of human reasoning. Contemporary political science has largely adopted the behavioral-economic model of political psychology. This model offers many insights into the limits of human reasoning, highlighting in particular the errors and biases that shape our choices. However, these insights come at the cost of an overly narrow view of human reasoning. When such a political psychology is applied to public policy and political rhetoric, it offers lessons on how to direct public action by taking advantage of unconscious thought processes, but it fails to teach how leaders might constructively engage human rationality. I argue that Aristotelian political psychology offers a useful corrective, one that can help us better understand both the potential and limitations of political guidance.

To gain access to Aristotle's political psychology, I begin with an overview of several of his psychological works: *On the Soul*, *On the Motion of Animals*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I focus in particular on the concepts Aristotle uses in his study of human choice, and I draw out Aristotle's unitary understanding of psychology, meaning the interrelated nature of thought and desire, which in turn illuminates the constitutive role that thought plays in shaping the ends of human action. From this theoretical basis, I turn to a more concentrated study of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, exploring first the rhetorical concepts Aristotle introduces in the work, and then delving into the psychology of persuasion. In this study,

I explore the ways that rhetoric necessarily engages the audience's rationality and judgment. A particularly valuable lesson is the way in which rhetoric can draw out overlooked concerns and thereby broaden the audience members' considerations, all in order to help them reach conclusions they would not by themselves. Returning to contemporary political science, I argue that Aristotle's conception of political psychology offers us a better understanding of human choice, and he offers guidance on how rhetoric can be used to refine, rather than only exploit, public opinion.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric, fittingly, is a word with different meanings for different audiences. For many people, rhetoric has negative connotations and it is often dismissed as superficial or obfuscating, as when a speech is regarded as "mere rhetoric" or when a speaker is told to "drop the rhetoric." In more extreme cases, rhetoric is seen as dangerous, the means for manipulating audiences through lies, half-truths, and verbal tricks. Especially when it is equated with the art of demagoguery, rhetoric is seen as antithetical to good democracy, undercutting the democratic ideal of each citizen freely expressing his own choice without distortion or manipulation. Rhetoric, however, need not be seen in such a negative light. Instead, it can be regarded more neutrally as persuasive speech. Indeed, rhetoric may even be an essential part of democratic politics because it is required for presenting the full merits of a position. Rhetoric, in this view, can be an aid to deliberation and it can help people make better decisions. One's view of rhetoric and its place in politics depends largely on one's understanding of how rhetoric works—and the understanding of how rhetoric works, I will argue, ultimately depends on one's understanding of human rationality and the psychology of persuasion.

In general, negative views of rhetoric are based on two lines of criticism. On the one hand, rhetoric is seen as overly controlling, offering an arsenal of tools for manipulating audiences. These tools include emotional appeals, "spin," skewed presentation, and other stylistic tricks. Audiences are misled, distracted, or otherwise overwhelmed by rhetoric, and as a result, they make choices they would not have made with a clearer view of matters. On the other hand, rhetoric is seen as mere pandering to

the audience. In this case, a rhetorical speaker identifies the immediate preferences of the audience members and tells them what they want to hear. This pandering is criticized because it is a failure of leadership: rather than challenging an audience with a better alternative, the speaker simply adopts the ill-considered aims of his audience. In both avenues of critique, there is an implicit belief in the weakness of human rationality. At most, the audience's reason is seen as solely instrumental, looking only for means to desired ends. In the case of manipulation, however, human reason is seen as weak and ineffective—it is easily distracted or overwhelmed by passions and desires.

Defending rhetoric does not require asserting a completely opposite view of human psychology wherein clear-sighted reason is the source of all action. Indeed, if that were the case, there would be no need for rhetoric. One would simply present a proposal that should then be appreciated and acted upon according to its logical merits. The only matter of concern would be presenting the correct alternative—everything else should be left to the rational audience and all other efforts by the speaker would be suspect. Rhetoric, however, is not simply a form of rational argumentation; persuasion requires speaking to the particular viewpoints of an audience, including their opinions, prejudices, and passions. While a speaker may seek to influence this viewpoint, it is not correct to see this effort as necessarily manipulative, nor is it right to speak of persuasion as if it were solely the result of some external force. Being persuaded is not a passive experience. Much of the effort obviously comes from the speaker: he must make his case, presenting his position to the audience. But the listeners also play a role: they must reflect on the position, evaluate it, and decide whether it makes sense or squares with their own

experience. It is this dual character of rhetorical persuasion that makes it an important part of democratic government in which citizens, as Aristotle puts it, are meant to both "rule and be ruled."[1] Similarly, it is the concern with the audience's viewpoint that allows rhetoric to be part of true political leadership because a speaker must attempt to draw listeners from their initial views, guiding them to a position that they would not have otherwise adopted. The challenge, then, for defending rhetoric as a legitimate political art is to see how the art of persuasion can be used to lead an audience while avoiding, as much as possible, the vices of manipulation and pandering. Such a defense requires an understanding of human psychology that recognizes the complex interplay of thought, desire, and passion that is involved in choice.

The work that follows is an attempt to understand rhetoric by means of a study of Aristotelian political psychology, specifically a study of Aristotle's view of human psychology and its relevance to rhetoric. My primary goal in this study is to offer a better understanding of how rhetoric works than is found in contemporary theories of political psychology, which embrace—and thereby encourage—the view that rhetoric is an art of pandering and manipulating audiences. By drawing on Aristotelian political psychology, I also aim to correct a fundamental flaw in contemporary psychological theories, which is their overly mechanical view of human reasoning. The narrow, instrumental view of psychology leads to the misunderstanding of many political phenomena, including

[1] *Politics*, 1332a11-27. See also Garsten (2006) on the democratic character of rhetoric (pp. 1-10).

rhetoric, political passions, and the role of moral concerns in politics. While my focus will be political psychology and rhetoric, I hope that this study can serve as an example for a broader correction of contemporary political psychology. I will conclude the present chapter with an explanation of why I am turning to Aristotle. First, however, I must identify more precisely what is lacking in contemporary political psychology and its corresponding understanding of rhetoric.

I. Rational Choice and Bounded Rationality

i. Psychological Theory

For the most part, "political psychology" today simply means borrowing psychological theories for the purpose of predicting or explaining political phenomena.[2] Accordingly, political psychology is generally a piecemeal approach, using different theories and methods to address issues such as voting behavior, policy preferences, and political leadership. However, the dominant approach for the scientific study of politics is that of "bounded rationality," a behavioral-economics approach based on the work of Herbert Simon, Daniel Kahneman, and Amos Tversky.[3] In the study of political rhetoric,

[2] This is the definition given in the *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (Sears et al, 2003).

[3] Simon (1978) and Kahneman (2002) were awarded Nobel prizes in economics for their pioneering research in this field (Tversky died in 1996). I should note that this general view of psychology has many different names, such as "behavioral-cognitivist models," "information-processing models," and "prospect theory" (the last is Kahneman and Tversky's label). There may be subtle differences between these theories, but I am treating them collectively under the rubric "bounded rationality" (coined by Simon, 1957b) because this name most clearly identifies their common focus on the limitations of human reasoning.

bounded rationality provides the psychological basis for such concepts as agenda setting, priming, and framing.

In the current section, I will outline the basic features of bounded rationality and explain how the theory is used in political science, especially in regards to political rhetoric. While I am ultimately critical of this approach to political psychology, I do not mean to dismiss it out of hand. It offers valuable insights, particularly regarding the flaws and limits of everyday human reasoning. Nevertheless, I will argue that Aristotelian political psychology remains relevant today and can offer a very helpful corrective to the assumptions of contemporary political psychology. To make this argument, it is necessary to be sure that I am responding to the actual theory and not a simple caricature of social science. Accordingly, I will consider the theory of bounded rationality in some detail. With that said, what follows is not meant as a comprehensive survey of bounded rationality—in particular, I will not dwell on the complex mathematical models used to predict behavior. Rather, I am identifying the core theoretical assumptions of the approach so as to highlight more clearly the alternative presented by Aristotelian political philosophy.

The theory of bounded rationality emerged from a critique of rational choice theory. Specifically, as rational choice theory came to be employed as an empirical rather than normative theory, its axioms and assumptions had to be modified for predicting human behavior. It is necessary to describe briefly the tenets of rational choice theory because bounded rationality is still largely understood in its opposition to the earlier

theory. In its most basic form, rational choice theory is a combination of classic utilitarianism and modern theories of economics. Within this theory, people are treated as self-interested "actors" who seek to satisfy their preferences in the most efficient manner possible; this "utility maximization" consists of ranking one's preferences, calculating possible actions, and choosing the course of action that is most likely to satisfy the most preferences at the least cost.[4] It must be noted from the outset that the "rationality" of rational choice theory refers only to *instrumental rationality*—namely, the calculation of means to given ends. The ends themselves are treated as "exogenous" to the theory, meaning that the ends of action are not based on "rationality." Rather, the ends of action are seen as coming from other sources, such as biological desires and social norms. Once the ends are identified, however, social scientists use economic theory as the guide for calculation, offering complex formulae for determining the most efficient means a person should follow for optimal utility maximization.[5] In its foundational form, rational choice theory was explicitly normative, offering an ideal of rationality and a guide for how one ought to act to achieve one's various ends. As an extension, however, rational choice was

[4] For seminal texts in rational choice theory, see von Neumann & Morgenstern (1944) and Downs (1957). For a more recent defense of the theory, see Riker (1995).

[5] Many different economic theories are employed under the rubric of rational choice. The most basic "utility theory" addresses individual rational behavior under conditions of certainty, risk, or uncertainty. "Game theory" is used to describe "rational" behavior between two or more individuals involved in cooperative or competitive bargaining. "Ethical" or "welfare theory" is a broader application of rational choice theory for realizing social goals. On these distinctions, see Harsanyi (1985).

also adopted by social scientists as a model for predicting behavior, based on the assumption that people will act in ways that seek to maximize their preferences.

As rational choice theory developed and grew in popularity, subsequent social scientists attacked the theory for ignoring the obvious fact that people do not act according to the economic ideal of rationality. The problem is that the basic models of rational choice employ an unrealistic conception of human reason, wherein actors are treated as all-knowing calculators who are fully aware of their preferences and are capable of carrying out the extremely complicated calculations required to rank their options and achieve utility maximization. Simon sums up this critique well:

> economists… attribute to economic man a preposterously omniscient rationality. Economic man has a complete and consistent system of preferences that allows him always to choose among the alternatives open to him; he is always completely aware of what these alternatives are; there are no limits on the complexity of the computations he can perform in order to determine which alternatives are best; probability calculations are neither frightening nor mysterious to him" (1957a, p. xxiii).[6]

[6] See Lau (2003) for further critiques of the rational choice model.

In opposition to rational choice theory, critics from the social sciences have emphasized the *constraints* on this ideal of rationality, or as Simon originally described it, the limits that "bound the area of rationality" (1957b, pp. 40-41).

Simon's work focused on the inherent limitations of human reasoning. The basic claim is that people are not omniscient calculators: they have limited awareness of the world and they have limited computational powers when making decisions.[7] Accordingly, explanations of actions must take into account these human limitations. In particular, theories of bounded rationality place special emphasis on attention.[8] Given their cognitive limits, people can focus on only so much of their external environment and their own memories, and so they must be selective in how they devote their limited "resources" when making decisions. Attention is used to explain this selection process, which means that attention is used to explain why certain information is available for a decision while other information is ignored. In turn, bounded rationality theories try to explain where attention will be focused in different situations. Another important and related concept for bounded rationality is "satisficing" (a portmanteau of "satisfy" and

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[7] "The capacity of the human mind for formulating and solving complex problems is very small compared with the size of the problems whose solution is required for objectively rational behavior in the real world—or even for a reasonable approximation to such objective rationality" (Simon, 1957b, p. 198). See Simon (1995), pp. 46-47, and Jones (2003) for more comprehensive summaries of the different features of bounded rationality.

[8] "People are endowed with very large long-term memories, but with very narrow capacities for simultaneous attention to different pieces of information. At any given moment, only a little information, drawn from the senses and from long-term memory, can be held in the focus of attention" (Simon, 1985, p.301).

"suffice"). Whereas rational choice theory posits actors who seek a solution that *best* satisfies their preferences, bounded rationality grants that people will rarely devote the time and energy to finding such an optimum. Instead, people will often consider alternatives only to the point where they find a "good enough" solution that they consider worth pursuing (namely, one that surpasses a certain "satisficing threshold").[9]

To sum up Simon's work, one can say that whereas rational choice theory posits unlimited rational capacities and optimal problem solving, bounded rationality offers models to explain why people make errors and stray from the "rational" optimum. A slightly longer summary statement is worth quoting from Simon:

> In short, people almost always have reasons for what they do but seldom the "best" reasons. That is to say, consequences of actions are ignored or misjudged, either because information is lacking or erroneous or because computational power (thinking power) is insufficient for estimating the consequences; trade-offs among goals are handled inadequately or not at all; and finally, potential effective actions may be unknown (and even unknowable) or ignored. As a general label for these departures from the

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[9] "Human thinking powers are very modest when compared with the complexity of the environments in which human beings live. Faced with complexity and uncertainty, lacking the wits to optimize, they must be content to satisfice—to find 'good enough' solutions to their problems and 'good enough' courses of action" (1979, p.3). Note, as Miller (1990) explains, satisficing can still be understood as rationally seeking an optimum in the sense that the actor is forgoing the prospect of better options for the sake of avoiding the costs involved with an uncertain search for unknown options.

> global rationality postulated in economic and public choice theory, we speak of human "bounded rationality" (1995, p. 47).

While Simon offered the initial model of bounded rationality, Kahneman and Tversky expanded on his work by exploring the different psychological mechanisms that influence choice. A basic idea of bounded rationality is that people simply cannot take in all of the information presented by their environment and memories—complete openness would lead to paralysis or "information overload." People have limited awareness, attention, and information-processing power, and so they must be selective when interpreting the world. In regards to making decisions, people are similarly limited in that they are not aware of all potential courses of action and they are rarely capable of calculating the most efficient means of pursuing their ends. Given these cognitive limitations, people employ mental shortcuts or "heuristics" when making choices.[10] Rather than objectively considering every aspect of a situation, people tend to focus on a few salient features over others, simplifying problems and potential alternatives. This use of cognitive shortcuts allows for quick decision making, but it also leaves people prone to making mistakes in their reasoning.

Much of Kahneman and Tversky's research involved identifying specific "cognitive biases," which are systematic errors or deviations from the ideal of rationality

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[10] Simon was also one of the pioneers of mental "heuristics" research, importing the idea from theories of artificial intelligence and computer science. See, for example, Newell, Shaw & Simon (1958).

that occur because of overreliance on cognitive heuristics.[11] For example, one mental shortcut is the "availability heuristic." When making decisions, people need to determine how likely a course of action is to succeed, but they do not consistently calculate probability; instead, people often judge probability based on how easily they can think of examples. If examples of success are more vivid or available to their memory, they will exaggerate the likelihood of success, and vice-versa with examples of failure.[12] Similarly, the "anchoring effect" involves a skewed sense of value wherein people focus inordinately on an initial piece of information, using that "anchor" as a gauge for judging subsequent information. If, for instance, a new alternative is more attractive than an initial option, a person will judge the second alternative as more desirable in general, more desirable than he would have judged it had he not encountered the anchor. The overall point regarding the "anchoring effect" is that people do not have an objective sense of value; rather, they look for immediate comparisons to establish relative value, and so their sense of value can be shifted depending on what one provides as the point of comparison.[13]

The mental activity involved in cognitive heuristics is largely automatic or unconscious. More specifically, models of bounded rationality distinguish thinking in

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[11] For an accessible and extensive discussion of Kahneman and Tversky's work as well as a survey of the broader field of bounded rationality research, see Kahneman (2011).

[12] See Tversky & Kahneman (1973).

[13] See Tversky & Kahneman (1974) as well as Ariely et al (2006) on anchoring being used for the "construction of value."

terms of two processes or systems.[14] The first system is the automatic thinking that characterizes the everyday activities wherein a person acts on immediate recognition, basic recollection, and quick reasoning. The second system involves complex and deliberate thinking. These systems are connected, however, and the deliberate thinking involved in choice often relies on the information provided by the more immediate thought processes—this reliance on immediate thought processes is what makes people prone to cognitive biases when making choices. These biases can be resisted through deliberate effort and attentiveness, but such an effort is not the norm. For instance, a corollary of the bounded rationality concept of "satisficing" (seeking sufficiently satisfactory rather than optimal solutions) is that people are regarded as "cognitive misers" who are reluctant to expend any more cognitive effort than is necessary.[15] Put more simply, people on average tend not to overthink situations; instead, they think only as much as is necessary to reach a satisfactory solution quickly. However, when people act on their immediate impressions, they rely on heuristics and are thus prone to the errors inherent in these mental shortcuts.

In sum, much of the bounded rationality paradigm involves explaining seemingly irrational human decisions in terms of the predictable heuristics and biases that

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[14] On the two systems distinction, see Stanovich & West (2000), Evans (2003), and Kahneman (2011).

[15] The term "cognitive miser" was coined by Taylor (1981).

characterize normal, everyday thinking.[16] That is, flawed (i.e. non-optimal or harmful) actions are explained in terms of misdirected attention, skewed information, and other cognitive distortions that occur because of the limited, bounded character of human rationality.

While many studies in bounded rationality are simply directed towards explaining general human behavior, the theory has more recently been applied to politics and used as a guide for influencing public action. I will turn now to discuss this application, particularly in regards to public policy and political rhetoric.

ii. Political Applications

The theory of bounded rationality has become influential throughout the social sciences, and, more recently, it has also become a guide for shaping public choice. Two of the more well-known advocates of applied bounded rationality theory are Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, whose book, *Nudge* (2008), popularized terms such as "paternalistic libertarianism" and "choice architecture."[17] The idea behind this approach to public policy is to maintain freedom of choice (libertarianism) while targeting

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[16] Two popular works in this vein are Dan *Ariely's Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions* (2010) and Tim Hartford's *The Logic of Life: The Rational Economics of an Irrational World* (2009).

[17] Sunstein joined President Obama's administration as the "regulations czar," head of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (2009-2012). In the UK, *Nudge* inspired the creation of the Behavioural Insights Team (also known as the "Nudge Unit") in the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office, with Thaler serving as a special advisor.

cognitive heuristics and biases in such a way that the public is led to act in socially beneficial ways (paternalism). A metaphor used throughout *Nudge* is the way food is put on display in a cafeteria. People are prone to select fatty, unhealthy foods, and storeowners may take advantage of this by giving prominent place to such foods, increasing consumer temptation. A public administrator, however, could more positively influence choice by mandating that priority be given to healthy foods, drawing these items to consumers' attention while putting unhealthy foods in less noticeable positions in order to reduce temptation and encourage healthy eating. A public policy example of this approach is setting defaults for public enrollment programs, such as automatically enrolling new employees in a retirement-savings plan or enlisting new drivers as organ donors. In each case, participants are free to opt-out of the default plan, but because of a propensity to accept defaults (the "status quo bias"), far more people will be enlisted in the default policy than would be the case if they had to choose the policy deliberately. Another example is the use of anchoring, such as when soliciting donations for public programs: if a recommended donation is suggested, donation amounts will on average be closer to the recommendation and higher than if no recommendation is given. In these and other instances of "choice architecture," administrators structure choices in a way that encourages the public to adopt a desired policy.

As with choice architecture in public policy, the theory of bounded rationality has similarly inspired studies of rhetoric, encouraging researchers to investigate how political actors influence public opinion by relying on cognitive biases and heuristics. For example, two basic concepts used to explain changes in public opinion are the "agenda-

setting" and "priming" effects.[18] The agenda-setting effect is the observation that those problems that receive the most prominent attention in the media become the problems that the public regards as the most politically pressing. For example, if people primarily encounter news stories involving the economy, they will believe that the economy is the most important issue facing the country. The priming effect is slightly subtler: prominent stories shape the public's *criteria of judgment* such that voters evaluate candidates primarily in terms of the issues that receive the most prominent media attention. If, for example, national defense stories receive the most attention, candidates will be judged primarily in terms of their security qualifications. Agenda-setting and priming effects are theories political scientists to explain mass media effects on public opinion, but politicians can apply these theories in their campaigns, using speeches, policy proposals, and slogans to focus media attention on the issues that favor their platforms.[19]

Both the priming and agenda-setting effects are explained by the bounded rationality observation that people are only selectively attentive to the world and tend to rely only on the information that is most readily prevalent in their minds. Indeed, Simon himself suggested that political rhetoric was primarily an effort to shift the audience's attention to particular issues:

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[18] These terms were introduced to political psychology by Iyengar & Kinder (1987).

[19] See, for example, Druckman & Holmes's (2004) study of State of the Union addresses as priming instruments.

> The narrowness of the span of attention accounts for a great deal of human unreason that considers only one facet of a multifaceted matter before a decision is reached. For example, it has been hypothesized that the art of campaign oratory is much more an art of directing attention (to the issues on which the candidate believes himself or herself to have the broadest support) than an art of persuading people to change their minds on issues. (Simon, 1985, p. 302)

> In fact, political wisdom suggests that a main purpose of campaigning is not to change people's values or beliefs but to turn their attention to those issues on which majority views favor the campaigner. (Simon, 1995, p. 51)

Subsequent researchers linked Simon's claims regarding political rhetoric with Kahneman and Tversky's work on cognitive biases, focusing in particular on the availability heuristic (the tendency to judge probability or importance based on what most readily comes to mind). The theory is that, given limited awareness of political issues, news media and campaign rhetoric serve to narrow the realm of consideration, directing public attention to particular criteria and making these criteria more likely to be recalled when people make political judgments. One study sums this theory up well, saying that in the case of presidential elections,

> [priming occurs because] people have neither the ability nor motivation to comprehensively incorporate every potentially relevant issue into their

> presidential evaluations. As some issues are brought into the foreground of people's thinking… others will be pushed into the cognitive background.[20]

The most popular concept employed in the scientific study of political rhetoric is the "framing effect." The research that inspired this focus on framing was another of Kahneman and Tversky's critical studies.[21] In this study, Kahneman and Tversky demonstrated that actors are highly sensitive to the manner in which a problem is presented such that subtle alterations in presentation can shape an actor's decisions. One of their specific examples was regarding medical treatment alternatives: people will much more frequently choose a treatment described in terms of survival rate (70%) rather than a treatment described in terms of mortality (25%). In this instance, the second option actually has a greater chance of success (75%), but because of the "loss frame," people are less likely to choose that option. In political instances of framing, speakers similarly evoke frames in order to influence an audience's decision. For example, a proposal for a new power plant might be presented in an economic frame (jobs gained) or an ecological frame (damage to the environment), the frame being selected with an eye to influencing the audience's receptivity to the proposal.[22] A more recent example is in the debt ceiling struggle: Democrats employed a "hostage frame" when criticizing Republican demands

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[20] Miller & Krosnick (1996), p.82. See Iyengar & Kinder (1987) for a more extended explanation of priming.

[21] Tversky & Kahneman (1981). For the application of this research to political science and media studies, see Iyengar (1994).

[22] See Chong & Druckman (2007a).

for budget cuts, casting Republican efforts as an attempt to hold the economy hostage in order to force unilateral cuts. Other cases of framing may concern the use of specific labels. Regarding inheritance, for example, one might refer to an "estate tax" (a tax on an heir's new earnings) or a "death tax" (one more tax added onto what the dead person has already paid over a lifetime).[23] Another recent framing effort is the label partisans use when discussing the Federal government's response to the 2008 financial crisis—a "recovery" act (which is an attempt to return to normalcy) or a government "stimulus" (yet another expansion of government into the free market).[24] In all of these cases, the goal is to influence public opinion subtly by encouraging the adoption of a framework favorable to a particular policy.

As with priming and agenda-setting, framing is explained in terms of limited cognitive capacity, but the emphasis is more on the contextual nature of evaluation. Whereas rational choice theory posits an effectively omniscient actor, fully aware of his environment and all potential alternatives in a situation, bounded rationality stresses the limited awareness of an actor. The basic idea is that multiple considerations might be brought to bear on a situation, but people usually consider only a few salient aspects before making a decision. The key to successful framing is to highlight certain elements of a situation over others in order to encourage people to adopt a particular perspective.

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[23] Frank Luntz, a key Republican strategist, recounts the details of the "death tax" and other framing efforts in *Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear* (2007).

[24] Example from the introduction to Schaffner & Sellers (2009).

As one study of framing puts it, "[frames] shape individual understanding and opinion concerning an issue by stressing specific elements or features of the broader controversy, reducing a usually complex issue down to one or two central aspects."[25]

In terms of what characterizes strong or effective frames, research has identified several factors.[26] Most notably, effective frames do not create entirely new perspectives; rather, they tend to reflect core values of an audience, drawing much of their strength from preexisting viewpoints. The initial stage of a framing effort will therefore often involve polling public opinion and testing focus groups in order to find a resonating viewpoint.[27] Frames are not wholly reactive, however, and their strength can be augmented. The most common tactic is repetition, wherein a frame is presented multiple times throughout a speech and echoed by multiple speakers. Other tactics include using emotional appeals as well as vignettes that portray how issues have impacted particular individuals. These work because emotional messages garner more attention (the "affect heuristic") and specific examples are more memorable (the "representative heuristic"), making a frame more salient to the audience and thus more likely to guide subsequent thinking about an issue.

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[25] Nelson, Clawson & Oxley (1997), p. 568.

[26] See Chong & Druckman (2007b), Druckman (2009), and Aarøe (2011).

[27] See Luntz (2007) for an in-depth look at the focus group process.

It should be noted that the focus of all of these effects—agenda-setting, priming, and framing—is not the *content* of an argument itself. This is not to say that the content of a message is unimportant: it is the position that a speaker wants the public to adopt. However, judging the merits of a position requires conscious thought by voters. By contrast, agenda-setting, priming, and framing are efforts to engage unconscious thought-processes (cognitive biases and heuristics) in order to condition an audience to receive a message and then trigger certain responses.[28] In this sense, these rhetorical techniques are very much akin to the choice architecture and engineering of choice employed by paternalistic libertarianism.

This should suffice for an overview of the bounded rationality paradigm and its application to politics. To this point, I have attempted to offer a sympathetic account of the theory, in part to offer an accurate portrayal of its assumptions and applications, but also to highlight some of its legitimate strengths. That is, it should be granted that bounded rationality offers some valuable insights—it is an improvement on the earlier rational choice theory, and to the extent that our reasoning is actually instrumental, the theory is helpful for identifying problems and limitations in human rationality. There are, however, some critical flaws with this theory. Having outlined the basic psychological

[28] See Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson (1997) regarding the sharp distinction between persuasion, on one hand, and framing and priming on the other. "Persuasion" is treated as a matter of introducing new beliefs, whereas priming and framing involve shifting the perceived applicability or priority of existing beliefs regarding a given issue.

concepts of bounded rationality and their application to public policy and political rhetoric, I will turn now to consider the difficulties with this view of political psychology.

II. Criticisms of the Bounded Rationality Approach to Politics

There are several practical problems with political policies premised on the theory of bounded rationality, as has been discussed most clearly in the literature responding to paternalistic libertarianism.[29] On the one hand, some worry that bounded rationality inspired programs will be insufficient for regulating behavior because there will be no long-term effects. The argument is that people may act differently as long as the proper "choice architecture" is in place, but it if the external pressures are removed, the problematic behavior will return. In the cafeteria metaphor, for instance, nutrition may be improved as long as unhealthy food is harder to access, but in any other environment, people will return to poor nutrition. The problem is that the underlying causes of bad behavior such as bad preferences are left unaddressed, and so there will be no long-term improvement of the problem without constant external pressures to shape choices. On the other hand, some echo Tocqueville's concerns regarding "soft despotism," worrying that choice engineering will be *too* effective and that it will have pernicious long-term effects. The fear is that, rather than making their own choices and learning from mistakes, people

[29] See, for example, Bovens (2008), Hausman & Welch (2010), and White (2013).

will be increasingly dependent on external pressures, ultimately becoming ever reliant on paternalistic guidance.

Regarding rhetoric more specifically, critics worry that bounded rationality inspired rhetorical techniques are used to subvert the possibility of genuinely deliberative discourse in politics.[30] The criticisms fall into the familiar forms of criticizing rhetoric, namely that it consists of pandering or manipulation. On the one hand, there is the worry that politicians seek to reflect public opinion all too quickly. That is, rather than trying to challenge or refine flawed opinions—and thus encourage some form of deliberation—politicians simply rely on "what sells," by using, for example, narrative frames that repackage opinions discovered in polls and focus groups. On the other hand, there is the worry that politicians can now more capably manipulate the public, relying on techniques that target unconscious thought-processes and cognitive biases, thereby avoiding the need for rational persuasion. One study on the increasing distortion of public opinion describes this fear well:

> Politicians are not in the business of educating the public. Instead, *they use rhetoric to trigger the psychological mechanisms that distort judgment*. They present isolated, unrepresentative facts; they frame issues

[30] See, for example, Ginsberg (1988) and Bartels (2003).

> tendentiously; and they seek to evoke an emotional response rather than encourage rational deliberation.[31]

These criticisms of applied bounded rationality have merit, but they lack the grounding for an alternative. To be sure, the critiques point towards deliberation and education, but they do not challenge the fundamental problem with the theory of bounded rationality—namely, that it is built upon an impoverished understanding of human reasoning. Most specifically, like the models of rational thought that preceded it, the theory of bounded rationality treats human reason as solely instrumental: the rationality that is "bound" is the same one idealized by rational choice theory.[32] While many bounded rationality researchers are not explicit on this point, Simon himself is very clear on the character of rationality:

> Reason, taken by itself, is instrumental. It can't select our final goals, nor can it mediate for us in pure conflicts over what final goal to pursue—*we have to settle these issues in some other way*. All reason can do is help us reach agreed-on goals more efficiently (1983, p. 106, emphasis added).

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[31] Kuklinksi & Quirk (2000), p. 168, my emphasis.

[32] As discussed in the previous section, bounded rationality is usually defined as a correction of the earlier rational choice theory. For a perceptive critique of bounded rationality as being merely an applied form of rational choice theory, see Miller (1990). See also Elster (1990) and Riker (1995), who, in a more sympathetic fashion, stress the broader compatibility of a bounded rationality and rational choice.

> Thus, whereas reason may provide powerful help in finding means to reach our ends, it has very little to say about the ends themselves. […] Reason […] goes to work only *after it has been supplied with a suitable set of inputs, or premises*. […] It cannot tell us where to go; at best it can tell us how to get there. […] It is a gun for hire that can be employed in the service of whatever goals we have, good or bad. (1983, pp. 7-8, emphasis added).

The ends of action thus stand outside the realm of rationality. Ends can only be justified by arbitrary commitments—"human fiat," as Simon puts it (1957a, p.56)—and so these ends can be influenced only by non-rational appeals.[33]

Along with reducing reason to a computational tool that merely calculates means to non-rational ends, the instrumental view of rationality also treats thought as radically separate from other aspects of psychology such as the emotions and desires. To the extent that an interaction is recognized, it is a one-sided one wherein emotions and desires serve as "inputs," supplying the ends of action. In addition, bounded rationality theorists grant that the emotions and desires shape the calculations made by reason by focusing attention

[33] I should note that I am only focusing on problems associated with the bounded rationality treatment of human choice. There is a much broader set of problems involved with Simon's narrow, positivistic view of science and his commitment to the fact-value distinction. On these issues and a more extensive critique of Simon, see Storing (1962). While Storing only addresses Simon's very early work, he accurately anticipates subsequent developments in Simon's theory and the problems associated with it.

and shifting awareness of potential alternatives.[34] Put more simply, it is granted by bounded rationality that the emotions and desires can direct (or misdirect) rational calculation, but reason does not have a reciprocal effect. Rather, the emotions and desires are treated as being outside of the scope of rationality.

Human reason is thus reduced to narrow, dry calculation akin to a computer's. It follows that human action is similarly seen as mechanistic, and efforts of influencing people are understood solely in mechanical terms, wherein inputs are varied so as to trigger desired responses from otherwise passive "actors." It is thus fitting that practical applications of bounded rationality have adopted labels such as "choice architecture" and "engineering of choice."[35]

Again, to the extent that reasoning is instrumental, bounded rationality offers some valuable insights on the nature and limits of computational reasoning. Otherwise, however, bounded rationality ignores the broader character of human rationality. Indeed,

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[34] See, for example, Simon's claims (1983) regarding the emotions: "A very strong case can be made, and has been made by physiological psychologists, that focusing attention is one of the principal functions of the processes we call emotions" (p. 21), and "emotion has particular importance because of its function of selecting particular things in our environments as the focus of our attention" (p. 29). For more on the role of the emotions as directing attention, see Marcus et al (2000).

[35] I have focused on the substantive claims of bounded rationality, but this only hints at the degree to which human action is regarded as mechanical. This view is more apparent when one delves into the details of the complicated mathematical formulae and other computational concepts, such as action being triggered once a pathway has reached a sufficient "activation potential" (Chong & Druckman, 2007a). See also Miller & Krosnick's (1996) discussion of the "grading hypothesis" wherein memories are activated according to their "node strength."

it even outright denies what I will be calling the constitutive character of thought. That is, by only recognizing the influence of the affects on reasoning, bounded rationality ignores the way in which thought influences and shapes the emotions and desires. Furthermore, bounded rationality is blind to the crucial role that thought plays in how we conceptualize the ends of action, or how we understand what is worth pursuing.

Proponents of bounded rationality models might reply that the theory is only making generalizations for the sake of predicting and it is not meant as a complete explanation of human behavior. Furthermore, they might claim that bounded rationality has better experimental support and it offers better predictions than other theories of behavior.[36] It could be pointed out that some critics question the long-term predictive value of bounded rationality, as it is largely supported by simple laboratory studies that may not generalize to real world situations.[37] This may indeed be a problem, but I am concerned with a more basic problem regarding generalization. Bounded rationality's empirical support comes from averages, trends, and tendencies, which may reflect much of the common, everyday thought that consists of instrumental reasoning. It is problematic, however, to generalize these observations to support a theory that makes a much broader claim about reasoning, namely, that human reasoning is *only* instrumental

[36] See, for example, Jones's (2003) support of Simon and bounded rationality as applied to political science. More generally regarding prediction rather than explanation, see Simon (1985), Elster (1990), Riker (1995), and Lau (2003).

[37] See Bovens (2008), Hausman & Welch (2010), and White (2013), as cited above regarding choice architecture.

and that rationality has no relation to the ends that we pursue. It is not correct to say that the theory is used only to make predictions rather than to give explanations; in fact, it is used to *rule out* explanations of human action, thereby *constricting* the sphere of human rationality to an extremely narrow realm. For instance, in the instrumental view, there is no room for ends to be affected by contemplation and clarification of what is truly worth pursuing—contemplation and clarity being key parts of what we normally associate with a rational way of life.

It is also inadequate and inaccurate to claim that bounded rationality is simply predictive, as if it did not have normative implications. This distinction cannot be maintained because bounded rationality does have normative commitments. Most obviously, the theory of bounded rationality still adheres to the *ideal* posited by rational choice theory: the cognitive flaws described by bounded rationality are the ways that people stray from the ideal of utility maximization. By identifying these flaws, bounded rationality readily serves as a guide for correcting cognitive errors and improving calculation. The only reflection required, however, is for identifying one's preferences and guarding against the cognitive biases that may mislead proper calculation. Other forms of reflection are implicitly ruled out. Indeed, by treating the ends of action as outside the scope of reasoning, by speaking of ends as though they were simply arbitrary tastes, bounded rationality encourages a relativism regarding our ends, precluding rational reflection and deliberation over what ends a person should pursue. Bounded rationality thus confines rationality to instrumental calculation, and in doing so, it *restricts* reason, discouraging the cultivation of human rationality.

Similarly, bounded rationality dismisses ways of engaging non-instrumental rationality, and in doing so, it diminishes the possibilities for political leadership. When seeking to serve the public good, it may be enough for a leader to identify people's aims and offer clear ways of achieving these. If, however, these aims are ill-considered and harmful, the only recourse bounded rationality leaves to a leader is to manipulate the public, redirecting attention and drawing on flawed reasoning so as to shape choices and make people pursue other ends. There is no room for challenging preferences, encouraging deliberation, and more openly guiding people towards better alternatives. There are limits to leadership, of course, and in particular the possibilities of rhetoric are limited, but bounded rationality imposes these limits in advance by confining rationality to instrumental reasoning. Lacking a broader conception of rationality, bounded rationality is unable to defend any form of rhetoric or explore the full possibilities of political leadership. Furthermore, as the dominant model for explaining political action, bounded rationality has a powerful influence on political actors because the theory serves as the basis for advising current leaders and educating future leaders. The overall result is a political science that encourages politicians to follow their inclinations to manipulate public opinion cynically and discourages any aspirations to guide people towards better alternatives.

It is not enough, however, to criticize the theory of bounded rationality and dwell on its limitations. If its notion of rationality is flawed, it is necessary to show that there is an alternative and establish that there is, in fact, more to human rationality than instrumental reasoning. Furthermore, to demonstrate the limitations of bounded

rationality as a political psychology, it is also necessary to explore the role that non-instrumental rationality can have in political life. These are my goals in the following study, and to accomplish them, I will be turning to a study of Aristotelian political psychology, for reasons I will now explain.

III. A Study of Aristotelian Political Psychology

Let me turn now to outline the scope of my study by briefly describing the chapters that will follow. First, however, I will explain why I am turning from contemporary political psychology to Aristotelian political philosophy.

i. Why Aristotle?

The simplest answer as to why I turn to Aristotle is that he most directly answers the pressing questions concerning political psychology. Most notably, he offers a rich account of how human rationality has more than just an instrumental character, and he presents this rationality throughout his psychological and political works. Of course, the merit of this account is what needs to be proven over the course of this study. For the moment, however, I can offer other reasons in advance as to why Aristotelian philosophy is particularly well suited to responding to contemporary political psychology and investigating the nature of rhetoric.

One reason for turning back to Aristotle has to do with finding an alternative view of human rationality. The idea that rationality is simply instrumental is not new. As mentioned, the core psychology of rational choice theory (and by extension, bounded rationality) is based upon utilitarian philosophy, which in turn drew on earlier British

Empiricists. For instance, David Hume argued that reasoning is a matter of discovering causes and effects in order to satisfy desires. Along these lines, he offered the most famous statement on the instrumental view of reason: "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."[38] Hume echoes here an earlier view articulated by Thomas Hobbes, who referred to thoughts as "scouts and spies" that "range abroad and find the way to the things desired."[39] Hobbes further argued that thoughts emerge from the desires:

> From Desire, arises the Thought of some means we have seen produce the like of that which we aim at; and from the thought of that, the thought of means to that mean; and so continually, till we come to some beginning within our own power.[40]

Thinkers such as Hume and Hobbes offer more thoughtful accounts of instrumental reasoning than those offered by theories of bounded rationality. By contrast, in Aristotle we find a substantially alternative view of human rationality.

It should be noted, however, that while Aristotle would disagree with Hobbes and Hume on several key points, he is not *radically* opposed to their views concerning rationality. That is, there are actually quite a few points of agreement, which makes the

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[38] *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Book II, part 3, section 3

[39] *Leviathan*, Part 1, ch. 8, par. 16.

[40] *Leviathan*, Part 1, ch. 3, par. 4.

disagreements more instructive. For example, Aristotle grants in his discussions on human action that thought is largely instrumental, its *primary* role in choice being the deliberation of means to given ends. Aristotle is also emphatic in stating that "thinking alone moves nothing" (NE 1139a36), meaning that he does not treat thought or reason as an independent, spontaneous controller of desire and motivation. Nevertheless, Aristotle does not treat thought as a slave or simple scout for the passions. Rather, he describes thought and desire as having a mutual influence on each other: on the one hand, practical thought is motivated thought, but on the other hand, thought plays a crucial role in shaping desire and passion. In drawing out this mutual relationship, Aristotle shows us the connection between rationality and the rest of human experience**,** thereby helping us understand the non-instrumental character of thought.

The Aristotelian view of rationality has been ignored by contemporary political psychology and the cost of this oversight is particularly evident in the continuing adherence to a dualism between thought, on one hand, and desires and emotions, on the other. There has been some recent development in regards to this dualism; in particular, researchers have noted that the emotions have a rational component that contributes to the judgments we make.[41] However, this development has been one-sided: it offers a more complex understanding of the affects, but reasoning itself is still seen as purely instrumental, with no influence on the affects. Moreover, the scholars challenging the

[41] See especially the neurologist Antonio Damasio's *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (1994), which is the most frequently cited work on this subject.

thought-affect dualism do not limit their criticism to dualistic theories from early modern philosophy; rather, they claim that from Plato to Kant, this dualism has been endemic throughout the Western tradition.[42] Turning to Aristotle provides a useful challenge to this myopic view of the history of philosophy. More generally, Aristotle offers a thorough and thoughtful account of human rationality, an account which could introduce concepts that have been overlooked by modern scholars who too quickly dismiss the history of political philosophy.

Another reason that Aristotle is especially helpful for responding to contemporary political psychology is that there are some striking parallels between Aristotle's context and our own in regards to disparaging views of human rationality, particularly concerning rhetoric. Though the formal study of rhetoric was invented in ancient Greece, rhetoric nevertheless acquired a very bad name. Indeed, rhetoric was linked with the subversion of justice and democracy, and rhetoricians were believed to manipulate audiences and "make the weaker speech stronger."[43] The sophists who embraced the subversive view of rhetoric had a correspondingly low regard for human rationality, believing that thought easily succumbed to the emotions and that people could thus be controlled by artful

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[42] See Damasio (1994) as well as Marcus's discussion of how emotions have been "conventionally understood" in the history of philosophy (2002, ch. 2).

[43] Aristotle identifies this phrase as a statement by Protagoras on his rhetorical art (*Rhetoric* 1402a23–5). The phrase is also used in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (889-1104) and Plato's *Apology* (18b).

rhetoric.[44] For example, in his *Encomium of Helen*, Gorgias describes the power of rhetoric by reference to the weakness of the human mind. In particular, he claims that a speaker can control people by manipulating their emotions, and he calls rhetorical speech an "incantation," likening it to "witchcraft and magic" (§10). Gorgias also refers to rhetoric as a drug because of its ability to take control of people:

> The power of speech has the same effect on the condition of the soul as the application of drugs to the state of bodies; for just as different drugs dispel different fluids from the body, and some bring an end to disease but others end life, so also some speeches cause pain, some pleasure, some fear; some instill courage, some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion (§14).[45]

Another famous rhetorician, Thrasymachus, similarly described rhetoric as consisting of "charms" that control people by manipulating the emotions.[46] While certainly less lyrical, accounts of bounded rationality also describe rhetorical techniques as exploiting limited

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[44] In the context of discussing ancient views of the emotions, I should note that I am referring to the term πάθος, which can be translated as passion or emotion. I will generally refer to the "emotions" rather than the "passions," as the latter term connotes a narrower subset of powerful feelings, such as rage and erotic love, whereas "emotion" seems to be a more neutral term that better encompasses milder feelings such as benevolence, compassion, and friendliness (which are discussed in Aristotle's analysis of the emotions). For similar reasons, I will generally refer to emotional rather than passionate appeals.

[45] Translation from Kennedy (2007).

[46] This is reported in Plato's *Phaedrus* 267c7-d1. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle refers to Thrasymachus's lost work, the *Eleoi*, as a (limited) study of emotional appeals (1404a15).

rationality and taking advantage of cognitive biases (such as the "affect heuristic"). Given that Aristotle criticizes these early rhetoricians for neglecting the role of reason in rhetoric and politics more generally, his critique can also serve as a valuable corrective to contemporary political psychology, which similarly disregards meaningful rationality.

At the same time, Aristotle's study of politics can also help us guard against an opposite extreme, namely that of *exaggerating* the role of reason and believing that political guidance should consist only of rational discourse. Regarding rhetoric, Aristotle grants that even well-used rhetoric may involve elements of manipulation and pandering. For instance, an orator may need to need to make emotional appeals and use stylistic devices rather than merely presenting a logical argument. He may also need to appeal to popular prejudices and opinions he knows to be false. The difference between the well-intentioned case and the sophistic use of rhetoric is that in the former, rhetoric is not used to obfuscate matters or mislead the thought of the audience. Rather, the speaker is trying to direct the audience's attention and build off of familiar notions in order to guide the audience to a better understanding of an issue.

Even though Aristotle grants that there is a degree of manipulation or pandering in rhetoric, it is important to emphasize that he does not *reduce* rhetoric to manipulation and pandering. Unlike Gorgias, for instance, Aristotle does not treat rhetorical appeals as an effort to undermine or overwhelm rational thought. Rather, he shows that to guide an audience and convince listeners to accept a position, it is necessary to engage their rational judgment. Even in the case of emotional appeals—which seem to be attempts to

harness irrational forces in the soul—Aristotle argues that a speaker must appeal to the thoughts and judgments underlying an emotion. Similarly, he shows that there is an underlying logic even in false opinions, a logic that must be adhered to in rhetorical appeals. In the best cases, a speaker can identify and build on the kernels of truth in these opinions in an effort to improve the audience's opinions.

In contrast to contemporary political psychology and its narrow, instrumental view of reason, Aristotle offers a more expansive account of the character of human rationality. His richer understanding of human psychology in turn offers us a more complete understanding of how rhetoric works and its potential for politics. However, before turning to Aristotle on rhetoric and political psychology, I will first offer an outline of the study that will follow.

ii. Chapter Outline

The following study will consist of four chapters. In Chapter One, I offer an in-depth discussion of the core concepts of Aristotelian psychology, drawing from several of Aristotle's works, including *On the Soul*, *On the Motion of Animals*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[47] The focus of this chapter will be on the psychology of choice and action. Subsequent chapters will address how choice is influenced by rhetoric, but it is

[47] *On the Soul* is commonly referred to as *De Anima* and *On the Motion of Animals* is also typically given the Latin title, *De Motu Animalium*. Much of Aristotelian scholarship follows the Scholastic tradition of imposing complicated terminology and jargon over the much more straightforward language Aristotle uses in the original Greek. This risks corrupting the original meaning and thought of Aristotle. To avoid this risk, I will be translating directly from the Greek, an effort that begins with avoiding Latin titles.

first important to be clear on the nature of choice itself. In particular, I will be considering the mutual influence of thought and desire on choice, as well as the role of thought in shaping the ends of action. This chapter will thus serve as an initial attempt at explaining the broader, constitutive role that thought plays in human action.

Chapter Two offers an overview of the *Rhetoric* as a whole. Just as it is important to be familiar with the terms and concepts of Aristotelian psychology, it is also necessary to understand Aristotle's approach to the study of rhetoric. In this chapter, I focus on the structure of the *Rhetoric* and explain the concepts Aristotle employs. A key part of this chapter will be an interpretation of Aristotle's *enthymeme*, a rhetorical device that helps reveal how rhetoric appeals to different aspects of the soul rather than to separate rational and non-rational parts.

Whereas the earlier chapters alternatively consider psychology and rhetoric, I combine these concerns in Chapter Three, exploring Aristotle's teaching on the psychology of persuasion. My analysis roughly follows the structure of the *Rhetoric*. First, I discuss the common end underlying rhetorical appeals, as explored in Book I's analysis of rational appeal; I then discuss the rational basis of the emotions, as presented in the Book II analysis of emotional appeal; and finally, in regards to the Book III analysis of style, I discuss how rhetoric attempts to guide thought through artful presentation. This last point regarding style is particularly important for comparing Aristotle's views with modern theories of political rhetoric, especially the theory of framing.

Chapter Four is the concluding chapter. In this chapter, I return to the issues discussed in this introduction. In particular, I explain how Aristotle offers a more complete account of human rationality and how this can serve as a corrective to the theory of bounded rationality, particularly with regards to its limited understanding of rhetoric. More broadly, I will discuss how Aristotle defends rhetoric's potential for guiding political deliberation.

I am casting a wide net in this study: first, in identifying and challenging the major presuppositions of the dominant paradigm in political psychology, and then in what follows, bringing together several of Aristotle's major works to offer a broader interpretation of Aristotelian political psychology. This cannot by itself be a comprehensive or complete study. However, one of the most valuable things I have learned studying Aristotle is to see past rigid dichotomies that are found in traditional debates. Free will vs. determinism, thought vs. desire, mind vs. body—these kinds of strict conceptual divisions limit our thinking. But with patience, we can find in Aristotle new ways of thinking about old problems. I believe that is also the case with political psychology. Regarding rationality, it is absolutely right to say it is bound, constrained by our human limitations, but we must be sure to consider the full character of rationality to understand both its limits and its potential. Regarding rhetoric, it is true that rhetoric is prone to the vices of pandering and manipulation, but we must consider whether it can also engage rather than simply exploit rationality. In what follows, I hope to show that

Aristotle offers us better ways of addressing these considerations than we find in political psychology today.

CHAPTER 1: CORE CONCEPTS OF ARISTOTELIAN PSYCHOLOGY

In the introduction, I presented the major concepts of bounded rationality theory, but also argued that it has severe limitations, particularly its narrow conception of instrumental rationality and its rigid separation of psychological concepts such as thought and desire. In this chapter I begin offering an alternative, turning to Aristotle's psychological works to explore a broader notion of rationality and how thought interacts with other aspects of the soul. I also begin laying the foundations for examining rhetoric. I will not be discussing rhetoric until subsequent chapters, but identifying the broader character of rationality is a necessary step for exploring how rhetoric can engage rather than only exploit limited rationality. That said, the subsequent chapters will not simply be an application of the theoretical concepts discussed in this chapter. The relationship will be more reciprocal. Gaining clarity on the concepts of Aristotelian psychology will allow for a better understanding of the psychology at work in the *Rhetoric*. The *Rhetoric* will in turn prove important for understanding Aristotelian psychology more fully. This is because the extended study of persuasion within the *Rhetoric* exemplifies and helps clarify the central concepts of Aristotelian psychology.

What follows is an overview of the core concepts of Aristotelian psychology. I begin by addressing Aristotle's thoughts on the structure of the soul. This is a necessary step, first, for correcting the mistake of making rigid distinctions between different aspects of the soul, and second, for understanding the common end underlying human action. I then turn to Aristotle's discussions of human choice and action to help explain these potentially abstract psychological issues. Finally, I offer an in-depth analysis of

Aristotle's account of "lack of restraint" (*akrasia*). This last investigation will allow for important clarifications regarding the role of thought and desire in action, and it will also help us understand the shifting character of the ends of human action. Taken together, the lessons found in Aristotle's works on psychology will prepare us to appreciate the rich psychology of persuasion found in the *Rhetoric*.

I. A Unitary Conception of the Soul

To address questions regarding the interconnectivity of the parts of the soul, as well as the deliberative character of thought, we must first see the manner in which Aristotle understands the different parts of the soul. I will argue that Aristotle ultimately holds a unitary conception of the soul wherein the 'parts' are not separate, but are rather different aspects or functions of a fundamentally singular soul. This unitary conception is far from self-evident, however. In common sense terms, we often speak of different parts of the soul acting in opposition to each other, most notably in the case of desire resisting and even overwhelming reason. Furthermore, Aristotle himself often employs a bipartite psychology. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for example, he frequently refers to a rational and a non-rational part of the soul.[48] Aristotle even further subdivides these parts, saying that the non-rational part is twofold: while one subpart, the "nutritive" (responsible for basic life functions) is wholly non-rational, there is another part, the "appetitive" (ἐπιθυμητικὸν) or "desiring" (ὀρεκτικὸν) part, that "somehow shares in reason" in that it

[48] See especially 1.13 and 6.1 on the bipartite division of the soul. The rational and irrational "parts" are discussed in 1.7, 3.12, 5.11, 6.5, 6.13, 7.2, 7.6, and 9.8.

can "obey" or "be persuaded by reason" (NE 1102b28-1103a1).[49] Following this identification of a part that is open to reason, moral virtue is described as the state of soul (ἕξις) acquired when the non-rational part of the soul is trained to act in accordance with the rational part of the soul. Much of the structure of the *Nicomachean Ethics* follows this bipartite psychology: in Books II-V, Aristotle investigates the moral virtues of the non-rational part of the soul, and in Book VI, he discusses the intellectual virtues of the rational part of the soul.

We should be careful, however, not to accept too readily this bipartite psychology as Aristotle's ultimate view of the soul. Indeed, in the *Ethics* itself, it is important to note the very cautious language he uses in his psychological presentation. The bipartite psychological account is introduced in the context of discussing the need for a statesman "to know *in some way* (πως) the things that concern the soul" (NE 1102a19, emphasis added). The statesman needs to understand psychology, but only to the extent that it "adequately" speaks to his political concerns, and so Aristotle says that he will use only a certain degree of precision in the discussion. As Aristotle puts it, going into a more detailed investigation would be "perhaps too laborious" (1102a25). Accordingly, Aristotle says that it is "sufficient" to rely on "popular accounts (ἐξωτερικοῖς λόγοις)" that refer to a rational and non-rational part of the soul (1102a27). In adopting this

[49] All translations of Aristotle are my own, though I have consulted the following English translations: *Nicomachean Ethics*: Sachs (2002), Bartlett & Collins (2011); *On the Motion of Animals*: Nussbaum (1985); *On the Soul*: Sachs (2004); *Rhetoric*: Kennedy (2007) and Sachs (2009).

"popular" psychology, Aristotle notes that he is putting aside the question of whether the parts of the soul are separated like the parts of the body or whether the "parts" refer to only a *conceptual* distinction between different aspects of the same thing, like two sides of a coin. As he puts it, the parts of the soul may be "two in speech but naturally inseparable, like the convex and the concave in the circumference of a circle" (1102a30-31). This statement on the parts being "naturally inseparable" offers a brief glimpse of what Aristotle might mean by a more complex psychology. Regarding the simpler, bipartite psychology, Aristotle gives some indications that it is overly simplistic, but for the most part, he leaves its adequacy ambiguous in the *Ethics*.[50]

In *On the Soul*, by contrast, Aristotle discusses the structure of the soul at much greater length and he is openly critical of partite models. His critique is partly directed at the Platonic tripartite model (dividing the soul into reasoning, spirited, and appetitive parts), but Aristotle also explicitly criticizes the bipartite model used by unnamed "others" who divide the soul into a rational and irrational part (432a26). Aristotle first criticizes partite models for being arbitrary in their divisions: he says that it is difficult to stop at two or three parts because one could further distinguish other parts that are sufficiently distinct in their functions, such as nutritive, perceptive, and imaginative parts

[50] Aristotle's cautionary language in presenting his bipartite model of psychology is similar to the discussion introducing psychology in Plato's *Republic* wherein Socrates warns that the tripartite model is imprecise and that "a longer road" would be required to give a more adequate account of the soul (435c9-d3, cf. 504b1-7). For an account of the limits of the *Republic*'s tripartite psychology and suggestions on how to move beyond it, see L. Cooper (2001).

of the soul (432a26-b4). The more significant argument is that partite models "tear the soul apart" (432b5). Aristotle explains using the example of desiring. One can speak of a separate desiring 'part' of the soul, but one can also identify desires in different 'parts' of the soul. In a simple case, one might locate curiosity (the desire to know) in the rational 'part' of the soul, a longing for vengeance in the spirited 'part' of the soul, and hunger in the appetitive 'part.' Beyond specific desires, Aristotle also refers to general categories of desire, speaking of "wishing" (βούλησις) in the rational 'part' of the soul, and spiritedness (θυμός) and appetite (ἐπιθυμία) in the non-rational 'part' (432b5-6). If desire is spread throughout the soul, then there cannot be a desiring 'part' that exists separately from the other 'parts,' overwhelming them at times or obeying them at others. To relate this point back to the *Ethics*, it is not quite right to say that there is a desiring 'part' of the soul that is distinct yet somehow open to guidance from the rational 'part' of the soul—because, at least in some cases, desire is present in the rational 'part' of the soul. When one speaks of a desiring 'part,' one "tears the soul apart" in the sense that the 'part' is an abstraction that is formed by taking particular desires out of their psychological contexts. Referring to such an abstracted form as a 'part' then creates the impression that it is distinct and that there is a necessary *division* between the different 'parts' of the soul, such as between reason and desire. While a partite model can be helpful for initially identifying different psychological aspects or functions—hence it is appropriate for introductory accounts—it can also be misleading, obscuring the broader coherence of the soul.

These difficulties with partite psychological models cast serious doubt on the bipartite psychology Aristotle uses in the *Ethics*, and so we should consider more seriously the possibility he raises that the parts of the soul are only conceptual divisions, separate "in speech but naturally inseparable" (NE 1102a30-31).[51] The question then arises, however, as to how we are to understand the soul in terms of "naturally inseparable" parts. To begin answering this question, it is helpful to note that in his discussions of action and choice, Aristotle speaks of a combination of thought and desire acting as one, which suggests that these parts of the soul may not ultimately be separate. The clearest statement in the *Ethics* on the unitary conception of the soul comes in Book VI, in a passage regarding choice (6.2). Aristotle says that "the origin (ἀρχὴ) […] of choice is desire and a rational understanding (λόγος) that is for the sake of something" (1139a31-33). The combination of thought and desire is required, because as Aristotle notes, "thinking by itself moves nothing" (1139a36). Aristotle goes on: "good action is an end, and desire aims at this. For this reason, choice is either desireful thought (ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς) or thoughtful desire (ὄρεξις διανοητική), and such a source *is* a human being"

[51] Some commentators take the differences between the psychological teachings of the *Ethics* and *On the Soul* as a sign that the psychological sections of the *Ethics* were written by a younger Aristotle, before he wrote *On the Soul*. See, for example, Ostwald (1962), p. 30 note 47, and his reliance on Nuyen's *L'Evolution de la Psychologie d'Aristote* (1948). As with other biographical readings of Aristotle's work, this interpretation ignores the careful language of the text—in this case the major qualifications Aristotle makes in the *Ethics* regarding bipartite psychology. For a conjectural account of the development of Aristotle's bipartite psychology, see Fortenbaugh (1975) and Rist (1989). On Aristotle's careful language qualifying the simplistic psychology, see Joachim (1951), p. 63. For an extended criticism of the biographical approach to interpreting Aristotle, see Section I of the next chapter.

(1139b3-5, my emphasis). There are several points to note in this description of choice. First, Aristotle identifies the source of choice as the human being *as a whole*: he does not speak of parts of the soul, but rather of a fusion of thought and desire.[52] Secondly, Aristotle describes this fusion of thought and desire as aimed at an end; that is, there is always a "for the sake of something" underlying choice. Finally, this direction is not wholly open-ended. Rather, Aristotle says that the end is "good action." More generally, the end of action is identified at the beginning of the *Ethics* as the good. Aristotle opens the *Ethics* saying "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice, seems to aim at some good" (1094a1-2). A few chapters later, he also says that "all knowledge and every choice reach toward some good" (1095a15).[53]

These passages on choice are dense, but, put most simply, they point towards a conception of the soul understood as an inseparable combination of thought and desire that acts according to a conception of what is good. This "simple" formulation still requires a great deal of explanation. In order to unpack this unitary conception of the

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[52] In this discussion of the unitary conception of the soul, I am only referring to how the so-called 'parts' of the soul are interrelated and combined into a unitary whole. A deeper argument can be made as to the inseparability of body and soul, which is what I think Aristotle means when referring to the "human being" rather than "the soul" as the source of choice. Discussing Aristotle's rejection of dualism would require a more in-depth discussion of *On the Soul* and Aristotle's description of the soul as an activity (specifically, an ἐντελέχεια) *of the body* (see especially S 2.1). For a concise account of the unity of the soul in terms of physiology, see Joachim (1951), pp. 64-66. See also Charles (2011) for a detailed discussion of how Aristotle's view differs from Cartesian and Post-Cartesian dualistic views of psychology.

[53] Aristotle makes similar claims about action aiming at an idea of the good in the *Rhetoric* (1362a21-25), *Politics* (1252a2-3), and *On the Soul* (433a28).

soul, I will look more closely at Aristotle's analysis of action. This focus has the advantage of offering a more concrete consideration of psychology than does a structural account of the soul. Moreover, focusing on action is particularly conducive to relating psychology to rhetoric because rhetoric is concerned with contingent affairs (the realm of action) and persuasion is ultimately directed towards influencing the choices and actions of an audience. A more thorough understanding of the psychology of action will thus prepare us to understand better how persuasion works.

II. The Psychology of Action

In this section I consider several passages from other works of Aristotle where he offers detailed examinations of the psychology of action. These passages are found in *On the Soul* (S), *On the Motion of Animals* (MA), and the *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE). In these works, Aristotle discusses the sources and ends of action. More importantly, he offers a model for *explaining* action. That is, Aristotle does not only identify the separate causes of action, but he brings them together to offer a more complete account of how they lead to action. I should note at the outset that while I am considering the ends of action, I am not discussing how one gets *proper* guidance to these ends or what ends one *should* seek. Rather, I am asking more analytic questions: How does one choose how to act? By what process do people make choices in light of different ends? What does the process of choice reveal about psychology and the role of reason? In the present section, I will focus on simple actions in order to explain the terms and concepts Aristotle employs in his

study of action. In the next section, I will discuss at greater length the more complicated issue of acting when confronted by conflicting ends.

In several works, Aristotle explains action in terms of "sources" and "ends." While the two general "sources" of action ultimately overlap, Aristotle initially identifies these sources as desire (ὄρεξις) and thought (νοῦς) (S 433a9, MA 700b19). *Orexis* is a broad term in which Aristotle includes more specific types of desire: wish (rational desire), *thumos* (spirited desire), and appetite (bodily desire). Thought, in this context, refers to *practical* thought: whereas contemplative (or theoretical) thought is directed at abstract or eternal matters, practical thought focuses on contingent things that one could change through action (S 433a13-15, NE 1139a35-b3). Like *orexis*, thought is a general category that encompasses more specific capacities such as reasoning (διάνοια), imagination, and even sense-perception. It may seem odd to treat perception as a form of "thought," but it must be noted that perception, as Aristotle describes it, is not a passive reception of sensory data. Rather, perception is an active process wherein sense data are taken in and organized into a coherent whole (see S 425a14-429a9).[54] The common element in reasoning, imagination, and sense-perception is that they all involve actively "making distinctions" (MA 700b19-24). Together, thought and desire are "sources" of

[54] For a discussion of the active nature of perception and its relation to imagination, see Nussbaum (1985), pp. 221-269.

action in that they are the psychological means by which a person conceives the "end" of action.

Again, Aristotle describes the ultimate end of action as "the good." As with thought and desire, Aristotle uses "the good" as a broad category. The good is constituted by a sense of one's conscious needs and, ultimately, by a desire for happiness (*eudaimonia*). More particularly, the good refers to anything a person might think is good and worth acting for, so it includes "the apparent good" as well as "the pleasant (since it is an apparent good)" (MA 700b28-29). In the *Ethics*, Aristotle offers a further distinction, identifying different general conceptions of the good as "the advantageous, the noble (or beautiful),[55] and the pleasant" (NE 1104b30-31). In making this division, Aristotle suggests that more particular goods could be understood in terms of these three broad categories of what is good.

The major theme of Aristotle's writings on action is that self-motion has an intentional character, and so the most essential feature of an explanation of action is its end, the thing "for the sake of which" a person moves (MA 700b16).[56] There are, of

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[55] τὸ καλόν is an ambiguous word that can be translated as "the noble" or "the beautiful," but it connotes both moral and aesthetic excellence. This combination can be seen in instances such as praising a courageous action as "a beautiful deed." Aristotle identifies τὸ καλόν as the end pursed by virtuous action (NE 1115b12).

[56] Aristotle notes that what particularly indicates an intentional cause of motion is not just the movement itself (which one might see in non-living things such as fire), but the *cessation* of action, which indicates that a person or animal acted on perception and a now-fulfilled desire (See S 406b15-25 and *Physics* 255a5-10).

course, other aspects of an action on which one could focus. For example, Aristotle is very interested in the role of physiology in action and he devotes several chapters of *On the Motion of Animals* to the subject. However, physiology explains only the *how* of an action, how it is that the body of a person or animal moves from one place to another. A full explanation must bring out *why* an action was performed, and this requires reference to the *end* as something the actor desires and thinks is good. Socrates makes a similar argument in Plato's *Phaedo*. Earlier philosophers, he says, offered different accounts of physiology, explaining *how* one moved by detailing the motions of the body, but they could not explain *why* one moved. Using his own condition at the time as an example, Socrates notes that if one wanted to explain *why* he remained in his jail cell rather than escaping as his friends urged, one would have to say that it was because this course of action seemed best to him. As Socrates jokes:

> I think these sinews and bones of mine would long ago have been in Megara or Boeotia, swept off by *an opinion of what is best*, if I didn't think it *more just* and *more beautiful* to endure whatever penalty the city should order, rather than fleeing and being a runaway. (98e5-a4, my emphases)

The physiology is important because the material cause allows the intentional cause to exist and operate, but the essential consideration is the intention and thus the end of action.

Taking the "sources" and "ends" together, Aristotle describes all voluntary action as coming from a combination of thought and desire aimed at some conception of the good. In the broadest sense, one can say that a person desired something, believing it to be good, and so he acted to attain it. To provide more detailed explanation of action, Aristotle uses a form of the syllogism, the practical syllogism. A theoretical syllogism is a series of premises leading to a necessary conclusion: there is a major (or universal) premise, a minor (or particular) premise, and a conclusion that necessarily follows. The basic syllogistic form is: All As are Cs, B is an A, therefore B is a C. A classic example of this form is: All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal. The practical syllogism differs in that it maps out the different elements of an action, highlighting the end of the action, the means to that end, and the action itself. Aristotle describes the major and minor premises of a practical syllogism as "the good" (end) and "the possible" (means) (MA 700b24-25). The conclusion refers to the decision to act, or it might be used to describe the act itself.[57] In the simplest cases, the practical syllogism can be understood as a model of instrumental reasoning: desire supplies the end and thought determines the means to that end. Aristotle uses the example of thirst: "'I must drink,' says appetite. 'Here's drink,' says sense-perception or imagination or thought. At

[57] There is an interesting ambiguity between the decision to act and the act itself, but as will be explained below, Aristotle does not suggest that there is an additional step or gap between decisions and actions (such as a free will that must affirm decisions before they lead to action). Rather, Aristotle claims that a decision necessarily leads to action. In terms of the practical syllogism, Aristotle seems to refer to the immediate action itself in the case of simplistic actions that require little calculation (e.g. I am hungry, here is food, I will eat), but for more complicated actions, he refers to the decision to act as the culmination of a deliberation.

once he drinks" (701a31-33). Another example that Aristotle uses is that of a person seeking a cloak:

> 'I need cover, a cloak is cover: I need a cloak. What I need, I have to make. I need a cloak: I have to make a cloak.' And the conclusion, the 'I have to make a cloak,' is [what leads to] action. And he acts from [this] starting point. (701a17-21)

These examples involve only simple deliberations of means to ends, but they are helpful for identifying the features of the practical syllogism. It must be noted that the syllogistic model is used only figuratively to identify the essential psychological causes of action. This conceptual framework need not imply actual language or a complex, drawn out calculation, and so it can readily be applied to basic, animal actions such as in the thirst example. Human action generally requires a more complicated explanation, however, which in turn introduces complexities into the syllogistic model of action.

The first complication is that the syllogistic model needs to be extended beyond a simple two-premise description in order to include more steps towards a decision. For instance, human action may be based on increasingly general or more universal opinions. Aristotle offers an example of this type of deliberation in the *Metaphysics* (in a discussion of causality and art), describing how a doctor might decide to heal someone:

> Since health is this [A], it is necessary if there is to be health that this [B] be present—for example, an equilibrium [of humors]. And if this [B], then heat [C]. And [the doctor] goes on thinking in this manner until he arrives

> at the first thing that he himself is capable of doing […] [namely] heat, which he produces by rubbing [D] (1032b6-9, 25-26).

The final goal of this action (health) requires a series of means-ends deliberations, with the action proceeding only when the person reaches a conclusion as to what he can do to bring about the goal. This example illustrates how a more complex action could be mapped out in a syllogistic format. More importantly, the example also helps reveal that the terms "means" and "ends" are relative distinctions dependent on how broadly one looks at an action. That is, there is not only a final end to an action (in this instance, health is the good being sought); when one draws out the fuller thought process behind an action, one can identify several intermediate ends (equilibrium of humors, heat), with each of these ends being a *means* to the broader end (health).

Along with extending the number of premises in the syllogistic model, it is also necessary to understand more fully the interaction of thought and desire that takes place in human action. So far, action has been described in solely *instrumental* terms, with thought being only a matter of determining the possible means to a set end. Thought may thus seem to be wholly subservient to desire. Aristotle's analysis of action reveals a more complicated relationship, however, with thought playing a *constitutive* role, meaning that thought helps determine not only the means but also the end of action. The broader role of thought in action is not immediately evident, and the notion even seems to be contradicted by a statement Aristotle makes in the *Ethics*:

> We deliberate not about ends but about *the things related to the ends*, for a doctor does not deliberate whether he will cure someone […] nor does anyone else deliberate about ends, but *having set down the end*, they consider in what way and by what means it would be the case (1112b11-16, my emphases).[58]

At first glance, this passage suggests a wholly instrumental view of thought, but several qualifications must be made. Most immediately, it must be noted that this description of choice is in the context of someone who has already "set down" an end and decided to act. In such a context, all of one's deliberation would take place in reference to the settled upon goal. It must also be kept in mind, however, that "means" and "ends" are relative distinctions, and immediate ends can serve as means to broader or more distant ends. There is thus room for clarifying what an end actually is or what purpose it serves. Regarding health, for example, even if it is simply accepted and "set down" as the desired end, there is still room to ask what health is. This can be seen in the *Metaphysics* example above concerning medical deliberation: before determining how to restore health, the doctor must decide what health is, affirming that it includes "an equilibrium [of

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[58] Deliberation "about the things related to the ends" is a translation of περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη. The πρὸς is an ambiguous preposition in this case as it could mean "towards" (as in, "we deliberate about the things [conducive] towards the ends") or it could be used to mark the relation between objects as I am reading it. I am interpreting the phrase in light of Aristotle's broader account of action which is not narrowly instrumental. For extended arguments on translating this passage and why it should not be read as simply instrumental, see J.M. Cooper (1975), pp. 11-22, and Wiggins (1980), pp. 222-27.

humors],” and only then does he decide that applying heat is the best means to that end. One could imagine other situations, however, in which the immediate end is not yet settled. For example, one might first need to decide to become a doctor, of if already a doctor, one might need to decide whether one should act as a doctor in a given case and provide health. In these more open-ended cases, one would have to consider the end of health in light of broader ends.

Another qualification on the instrumental view of choice is that it is necessary to understand how the end of action is “set down.” In a completely instrumental view, desire sets down the end and thought calculates the means to that end. As Aristotle describes it, however, thought and desire are not wholly separate. The relationship between the two can best be seen by looking more closely at Aristotle’s complex view of “desire” (ὄρεξις). As mentioned above, Aristotle uses the word *orexis* as a general category that includes more specific types of desire: wish (rational desire), *thumos* (spirited desire), and appetite (bodily desire). Aristotle invented the word ὄρεξις, making a noun from the verb ὀρέγω, which means “to stretch” or “reach out.”[59] The word wonderfully captures the sense in which all desires focus on and are directed towards an object. As Aristotle says in *On the Soul*, “every desire is for the sake of something” (433a15). In calling desire *orexis*, Aristotle is indicating that desire is *active*—it is not merely a passive lack or absence, but rather it is an active “reaching out.” Moreover, desire is *intentional*—it is a

[59] On the etymology and history of the term ὄρεξις, see Nussbaum (1986), pp. 273-76.

"reaching out" *for something*. This intentional conception of desire is similar to Aristotle's understanding of perception, which he similarly describes as an active process (see S 425a14-429a9). As with perception, there may be a passive element to desire, which might be a sensation of a need or a lack; however, for desire to become anything more than a vague, indefinite feeling of pain or need, it must be given shape as a need *for something*. Desire in the full sense of ὄρεξις only comes into being with some form of interpretation such that the basic sensation of a lack becomes a longing for and a reaching out for that which is needed. For this reason, Aristotle stresses that imagination plays a critical role in desire: "the capacity of desiring [ὀρεκτικὸν] does not exist without imagination" (S 433b28-29).

The intentional character of desire and the role played by imagination help reveal that there is an essential cognitive element in desire, which in turn points to the broader constitutive role thought plays in action. Desire does not exist as an entirely separate entity or force that commands thought, nor is thought simply subservient, playing a merely instrumental role in determining how to satisfy desires. Rather, desire contains thought and is partly constituted by thought. In *On the Motion of Animals*, Aristotle describes this broader role of thought, saying:

> This, then, is the way that animals begin to move and act: the immediate cause of movement is desire, and this [i.e. desire] comes to be through sense-perception or imagination and intellect (νοήσεως) (701a33-36).

Aristotle thus describes all desires, no matter how simple, as having some basic element of thought. Speaking of thought as an element of desire still treats the two as overly separate; this may simply be an artifact of language as we use separate words for referring to the two concepts. However, in a crucial passage in *On the Soul*, Aristotle suggests that thought and desire are truly united in the sense that desire is a *unique form* of perception or imagination (which are forms of thought):

> Perception is similar to speech or thought by itself. But when [the thing perceived] is pleasant or painful, [the soul] pursues or flees it, as if one were affirming or denying it. ... Aversion and desire are the same in regards to their activity, and [further], the capacities for desiring and aversion are not different from each other, *nor are they different from perception*, though *their being is different*. In regards to the thinking soul, the things of the imagination (τὰ φαντάσματα)[60] hold the place of perceptions. *And whenever* [the soul] *affirms or denies that something is good or bad, it pursues or flees that thing*. (431a8-16, my emphases)

This is a difficult passage, but put most simply, it suggests that desire *is* a form of thought wherein one not only recognizes something ("thought by itself"), but one recognizes it as

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[60] "Things of the imagination" is often translated as "images," but that falsely suggests that imagination only consists of visual images (which might be misunderstood in the passive sense of decaying sensory data) rather than an active representation based on an interpretation of the senses.

desirable for oneself. Once one believes that something is pleasant or good, the soul is drawn towards that thing, desiring or "reaching" for it. This difference in activity may be what Aristotle means when saying that, although desire is in some way a form of thought, it has a different "being."[61] More broadly, I believe this is ultimately what Aristotle means when he says that the thinking and desiring "parts" of the soul are "naturally inseparable" (NE 1102a30).

A caveat must be made here regarding the constitutive role that "thought" plays in desire. Aristotle includes perception, imagination, and reasoning (διάνοια) in the general category of "thought" (νοῦς; see S 433a9, MA 700b19). And while he clearly says that desire does not exist without imagination (S 433b28-29), this does not imply that conscious thought is involved in the formation of desire. In the case of animals, their "thought" consists mainly of perception and what Aristotle calls "sensory imagination" (S 433b30, 434a5). Animals focus only on immediate, particular concerns (cf. NE 1147b3-5), and as Aristotle describes it in *On the Soul*, they simply live by their desires, acting on whichever desire is strongest: "at one time this desire wins out and knocks away that one, and at another time, that one wins out and knocks away this one like a ball" (434a12-14). Human beings, by contrast, have greater rational capacities and a "deliberative imagination" (433b30): they have greater memory, a sense of time, the

[61] On interpreting this passage of *On the Soul* as a statement on the coexistence of thought and desire, see Charles (2007), pp. 201-205. In this context, Charles refers to desire as "hot cognition."

ability to compare and to think things through, and so humans can weigh different possibilities against each other. Humans are thus able to distinguish immediate from long-term goods and apparent from actual goods.[62] This human capacity to deliberate and distinguish goods serves as the basis for deliberate *choice*.

Regarding the distinction between choice and action, Aristotle treats choice as a subset of voluntary action: whereas choice entails a significant degree of deliberation, "voluntary" (ἑκών) action is all action that comes "from oneself" (δι' αὑτοὺ). Voluntary action thus includes any simple action towards a desired end, and so it can include the action of animals, (quasi-rational) children, and fully-developed adults (cf. NE 1111b6-10, R 1368b10-12). Choice refers more specifically to action based on deliberation; it involves weighing alternative courses of action and considering the end one is pursuing. To understand how choice is made between *competing* alternatives, it is necessary to recall that Aristotle describes all voluntary action (including choice) as aimed at "the good," which includes the apparent good, the advantageous, the beautiful, and the pleasant. This orientation towards the good is not very important when considering animals because they do not engage in complex deliberation regarding different possible goods; instead, they act in light of basic pleasure and pain, which one can understand as the immediate apparent good and bad. Humans, by contrast, have a "deliberative

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[62] In his biological works, Aristotle notes that there might not be an absolute divide between humans and animals regarding reasoning. While animals have lesser rational capacities, Aristotle grants that some animals have a degree of memory, opinion, and intelligence: see *On Memory and Recollection*, 450a15ff.

imagination": rather than always acting on the immediately perceived good, they can think through different possibilities and weigh their alternatives in light of a broader idea of what is good. As Aristotle puts it in *On the Soul*, "whether one acts this way or that is a task for reason, and this must be measured by one criterion, for one looks towards *the greater good*" (434a7-9, my emphasis). When the end of an action is already settled, the "greater good" is simply the best possible *means* to the end. When the end is not clear, however, and one is confronted by different possible courses of action, one can understand the different ends as intermediate or subordinate ends, which are means to a higher or more general good. Choice in these circumstances involves determining which particular end is conducive to a greater good. Using the health example from above, if one has "set down" health as the end of action, accepting health as the good to be pursued, one will calculate the best possible means of providing health. However, one could also try to decide whether health actually is the best end to pursue. For instance, one might consider the quality of the patient's life (he might be old and suffering, not wanting to be kept alive); or the patient might be a criminal whom one does not think deserves healing; or the patient might have an infectious disease that would put the doctor at risk.[63] In each case, one must weigh health against other alternative goods such as nobility ('human dignity'), justice, and safety, trying to decide which is the greater good in the given context.

[63] This last example concerning the doctor's health is taken from J. M. Cooper (1975), p.17.

I will discuss choice further in the next section, but first it may be helpful to summarize the discussion of action to this point. Aristotle explains action by reference to the end being sought. The end of action might be anything, but it is not entirely neutral or open-ended; rather, it has some positive content in that it is held by thought and desire to be something good. Aristotle brings thought, desire, and the good together in a syllogistic model, describing an action in terms of the good end sought and the means to that end; the practical syllogism can be drawn out to include several intermediate 'ends' which are in turn the means to a higher or broader end. It is tempting to think of the syllogistic model solely in instrumental terms, with desire setting the end (major premise) and thought only determining the means (minor premise[s]) to that end, but Aristotle describes thought and desire as an intricate fusion, with thought and desire together forming the "premises" of an action. Desire is constituted in part by thought, and so thought also helps inform the end of action. Similarly, practical thought—"intellect that reasons for the sake of something and is concerned with action" (S 433a13-15)—is motivated thought, which means it is connected to and partly informed by desire. The essential connection of thought and desire is that they together aim at a conception of the good. If a person thinks something is good, he will desire it, and desires contain the implicit thought that something is in some way good.

An obvious challenge to the conception of choice above is what Aristotle calls *akrasia* ("lack of self-control" or "incontinence," sometimes misleadingly translated as "weakness of the will"). *Akrasia* refers to the common experience of a person seeming to know that one thing is better for himself (e.g. exercise) than some other end (usually

pleasure) but nevertheless choosing the worse end. After making such a choice, the person might say that he was overwhelmed in the heat of the moment, acting on desire or passion against his better judgment. This common experience offers a serious challenge to Aristotle's explanation of choice because it clearly highlights the potential conflict between (and hence separation of) thought and desire. Furthermore, it challenges Aristotle's claim that people act according to their conception of the good: in *akrasia*, it seems that the person is choosing what he knows to be bad. Given the seriousness of this challenge, it is particularly worthwhile to consider Aristotle's explanation of *akrasia* because it will help clarify several aspects of his account of choice and action.

One aspect of Aristotle's account of action that I have not yet discussed has to do with the notion that there is a separate psychological faculty of the will. To address this challenge, a brief aside is necessary. Aristotle explains voluntary action in terms of thought and desire, describing the process of finding the best means to particular ends; at no point, however, does he say that there is a separate decision process following deliberation in which a person subsequently chooses to pursue the best means to an end. Indeed, Aristotle says that action follows immediately upon a completed deliberation (e.g. MA 701a33-35, NE 1147a26-28). Even more significantly, Aristotle says that the action *necessarily* follows a completed deliberation and he uses the strongest Greek word for necessity, ἀνάγκη. Aristotle describes this necessity using an analogy to the syllogism: as a conclusion necessarily follows from certain premises, so too does an action follow from the premises of a practical syllogism. For example, when describing a practical syllogism, he says, "when one conclusion comes from them [the premises of an

action], *it is necessary* (ἀνάγκη) then for the soul to affirm it, and in reasoning about doing something, [it is necessary] for one to perform the action at once." He further adds that upon finding the means to an end, "*it is necessary* for someone, who is able to and is not prevented, to do this at the same time he recognizes it" (1147a26-31, cf. MA 700b15-16, my emphases).

This is not the place to enter into the full debate between free will and determinism. Aristotle does not discuss the will, and indeed, it is an alien concept to his account of action. To construct a debate, it would be necessary to introduce a framework from other philosophical accounts of action that rely on the will. For the moment it is sufficient to note that Aristotle offers a coherent account of action that largely avoids the familiar positions found in modern arguments. One might see Aristotle as a "determinist" given that he discusses action in terms of necessity, but this position usually describes humans as *passive* subjects that are compelled by *external* causes (e.g. a reductionist account that looks only to matter in motion).[64] Aristotle, by contrast, puts an emphasis on the *active* psychological role of thought, desire, and the conception of what is good; he thus describes voluntary action in terms of *internal* causes in *active* subjects. Yet, on the other hand, one could not classify Aristotle's account of action as one of "free will" because he does not see choice as wholly free or spontaneous; choice does not stand radically apart from all the other sorts of causes that might move a person. Aristotle thus

[64] In *On the Soul*, Aristotle criticizes mechanistic accounts of action offered by materialists such as Democritus.

offers an explanation of action that stands outside of the dichotomy of free will and determinism familiar to us, and for this reason it is all the more important to try to appreciate the account on Aristotle's own terms. In explaining the active role of thought even in *akrasia*, Aristotle offers a critique of the notion that action is simply based on blind compulsion. At the same time, he also offers an implicit critique of the will by offering an alternative account of voluntary action that does not require reliance on a mysterious separate faculty. Given the importance of gaining further clarity on Aristotle's account of action, it is thus worth considering in depth his explanation of *akrasia*.

III. *Akrasia* and the Conflict of Competing Ends

Within the context of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the account of *akrasia* in Book VII expands on Aristotle's discussion of virtue and vice, but for present purposes, I am turning to the account to clarify Aristotle's understanding of choice and action. Up to this point, I considered relatively easy choices of deciding the best means to an end. I focused on these simple cases to explain Aristotle's syllogistic account of action and the mutual role of thought and desire in determining both the means and ends of action. Hard choices, however, involve a conflict between desired ends. Such choices require looking beyond the immediate ends and determining which possible end offers the greater good. At times, however, there seems to be an internal conflict wherein a person believes that one end is better but nevertheless desires and acts for the other end. This experience challenges Aristotle's claims that thought and desire are ultimately united, and in doing so, *akrasia* challenges his whole account of action.

Before offering my own interpretation of *akrasia* as presented in Book VII, chapter 3 (7.3) of the *Ethics*, I must note that this is an extremely disputed section of the *Ethics*. Interpreters disagree regarding Aristotle's understanding of *akrasia* and they come to wholly opposite conclusions as to whether Aristotle ultimately believes that *akrasia* exists as it is commonly understood (namely, as desire overwhelming reason). Put most concisely, the dispute ultimately centers on Aristotle's relation to Plato and Socrates. At the end of 7.3, Aristotle clearly states that Socrates was at least in some sense correct, saying, "it seems that what Socrates was seeking turns out to be the case" (1147b14-15). The scholarly disagreement concerns the way in which Aristotle agrees with Socrates. In several Platonic dialogues, Socrates claims that *akrasia* does not exist: he says that when people act badly, they do so out of ignorance—that is, they erroneously believe they are doing what is best.[65] Socrates thus seems to present *akrasia* as simply a cognitive problem: if one *knows* what is good, one will do what is good, and one will never be conflicted or overcome by desire. Many interpreters accept this direct reading of Socrates's claims and believe that Aristotle similarly regards *akrasia* as a cognitive problem.[66] Other interpreters completely disagree with the so-called Socratic stance; they

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[65] Socrates discusses *akrasia* in Plato's *Protagoras* (352a8ff.), asking whether knowledge is dragged around like a slave or whether "if in fact someone knows the goods things and the bad, he won't be overpowered by anything so as to do anything other than what knowledge bids him to do" (352c4-6). Plato's *Meno* (77c1-78a8) presents Socrates' argument for the primacy of the good, that everybody desires the good and those who act for what is bad do so out of ignorance.

[66] Destrée (2007) offers a survey of "intellectualist" interpreters who accept this view of *akrasia*. See Charles (2007), pp. 194-199, for a similar survey. Wiggins (1980), p. 248, criticizes Aristotle for being "strangely Socratic" in 7.3 and accuses him of being inconsistent with his more nuanced approach in the rest of the *Ethics* (cf. Santas (1969), pp. 184-189).

argue that *akrasia* is a problem of bad character and desires. Indeed, many go so far as to say that Aristotle fully agrees with common opinion against Socrates, concluding that desire does in fact overwhelm reason. In this case, Aristotle's agreement with Socrates is ironic, or it is only offered to the degree that Aristotle can "hand a sop" to Socrates.[67]

I disagree with both of these general approaches. They are too dualistic, treating thought and desire as overly separate, and these interpretations focus only on thought or bad desire as the sole cause of *akrasia*. Understanding Aristotle's position requires appreciating how thought and desire are "naturally inseparable." Furthermore, while this is not the place for Platonic exegesis, I will simply note that neither interpretation adequately understands the Socratic position. In the Platonic dialogues, Socrates offers provocative paradoxes that are meant to challenge his listeners. While the conclusion itself might ultimately be serious, the position is not as simplistic as it initially seems. Aristotle offers a very sophisticated analysis of the phenomenon of *akrasia*, and when he says that Socrates was correct, I believe he is offering guidance on how one can understand a paradoxical Socratic position that may otherwise seem "patently

[67] The "sop" line comes from Brodie's commentary (p. 393), who argues that Socrates failed to understand *akrasia* because he lacked Aristotle's "developed psychology" (p. 386) (in Rowe & Brodie, 2002). Rorty (1980) similarly views Aristotle as agreeing with common opinion. For others, see the surveys mentioned in the previous footnote.

outlandish."[68] With that said, in what follows, I will focus solely on Aristotle's interpretation of *akrasia*.

To turn now to the *Ethics*, Aristotle takes up the discussion of *akrasia* in Book VII. In earlier books, Aristotle discussed the different moral and intellectual virtues, and now he addresses other related character states, focusing in particular on the distinction between self-restraint and lack of restraint (*akrasia*). He begins by considering the common opinions (ἔνδοξα) regarding these matters, noting that they usually identify a conflict between thought and desire: self-restrained people resist their base desires, standing by their reasoning, whereas those who lack self-restraint depart from their reasoning, acting out of passion despite knowing that their desires are base (1145b10-14). After considering the common view, Aristotle raises a puzzle or perplexity (ἀπορία): How could someone with proper convictions lack self-restraint? It is at this point that Aristotle introduces the contrary position held by Socrates, who denied that something could "overpower [knowledge] and drag it around like a slave" (1145b23-24). The Socratic position suggests that *akratics* (unrestrained people) are not overcome, but rather they act out of ignorance. Rather than immediately endorsing or rejecting Socrates's position, Aristotle points out that it is far from obvious: it "disputes the phenomena that

[68] In this regard, I wholly agree with Tessitore (1996) whom I quote. His claim is worth citing in full: "The particular arguments that Aristotle makes in this section address the question of moral goodness from the perspective of both dialectic and natural philosophy. Within this broader horizon of inquiry, Aristotle attempts to move his readers from an initial frustration with the patently outlandish character of Socratic inquiry to some appreciation for the less than obvious truth to which that inquiry was devoted" (p. 57).

come plainly to sight" (1145b27-28). Everybody has at some point experienced *akrasia*, wherein they seemed to succumb to passion or desire. Socrates claimed that knowledge is enough to guide action, but experience suggests that something more is required. Indeed, elsewhere in the *Ethics*, Aristotle ridicules those who quickly adopt something like Socrates's position, those who think that virtue is not a matter of training the soul and instead think that "by taking refuge in speeches they are philosophizing and in that way they will be serious people" (1105b13-14, cf. 1147a19-20). Nevertheless, despite these criticisms and warnings not to accept Socrates's position too readily, Aristotle does not dismiss the Socratic claim against common experience.[69] Instead, he says it is necessary to examine the issue and consider in what way *akratics* might be ignorant of their actions.

Akrasia is viewed as an act that is taken despite a person *knowing* it is bad. To address this common view, Aristotle looks more closely at the knowledge claim, asking if the unrestrained person truly had knowledge when he acted. Aristotle begins by refining the challenge posed by common experience, trying to identify an instance of action truly going against knowledge. There are several ways of possessing knowledge that do not

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[69] Many of the interpreters who reject the Socratic interpretation of *akrasia* do so on the grounds that Aristotle's interpretive effort seeks to "save the phenomena" of common experience. See especially Nussbaum (1986), pp. 240-263. This position misrepresents Aristotle's dialectical "method" (described at NE 1145b1-7). Aristotle gives great weight to common experience and he treats it as a serious authority that must be considered, but he also says that *common opinion must be examined* (just as one also must examine the opinions of other authorities such as the wise). Only what stands up to dialectical examination will be accepted as an adequate explanation. Aristotle's statement in 7.2 that Socrates's claim goes against the phenomena of common experience is thus only a *preliminary* remark and it can only be assessed after the examination offered in 7.3.

present a challenge to the Socratic position. For example, for knowledge to guide a person, it is not enough that the person has the potential ability to answer a question when called upon, but rather he must be "actively contemplating" the relevant knowledge and keeping it in mind when he acts (1146b34). In other words, it is possible that the person has forgotten what he used to know or perhaps he is tired or absent-minded; in these cases, the person is not truly or strictly acting contrary to what he knows. Similarly, it is also possible that a person simply makes a mistake in applying his knowledge. As Aristotle says, the person might have the appropriate "universal premise" regarding the right thing to do, but he may misperceive the situation, applying the wrong "particular premise" (1147a1-8). Again, there is nothing strange about making mistakes and this lack of knowledge does not capture the claims of *akrasia*. The problematic case, however, would be if someone actively considered and properly applied his knowledge of what is good but nevertheless acted contrary to his knowledge. This would mean that even the most solid knowledge could be overcome. Having identified the real challenge, Aristotle echoes Socrates, claiming that such an act against true knowledge would be "terrible" (1146b35) and "a cause for wonder" (1147a9).

As terrible or wondrous as it may be, the phenomenon does seem to exist and it must be explained. Aristotle begins his explanation of *akrasia* by referring to a third way of possessing knowledge, namely, when someone "both has it in a certain way and does not have it" (1147a13-14). The person has knowledge in the sense that he is able to recite words and arguments, but these seem to have no real meaning to the person, suggesting that he does not truly understand or possess the knowledge. Aristotle likens such a person

to those who are drunk, insane, or asleep, and he also points to students who can rehearse a lesson but do not truly understand it; these are instances of people who are able to say hollow phrases that lack meaning. Real knowledge, by contrast, is acquired slowly: "one must grow into (συμφυῆναι) the knowledge, and this requires time" (1147a22). In likening *akrasia* to these cases, Aristotle suggests that the unrestrained lack knowledge in some crucial sense. Further, he indicates that real knowledge is not mere words or arguments, but that there is something to knowledge beyond thought by itself.

While these examples provide analogies for describing *akrasia*, they do not offer an actual explanation of the phenomenon, nor does the comment that one must "grow into" knowledge. Aristotle's real explanation of *akrasia* comes in his next argument, when he shifts to consider lack of restraint "from the standpoint of nature" (φυσικῶς). This "naturalist" section is very difficult because it is here that Aristotle most clearly moves beyond the simplistic, bipartite psychology he introduced in Book I of the *Ethics*. This is not to say that the section is inconsistent with what comes before it, but rather Aristotle uses much greater precision in his attempt to draw out a causal explanation of *akrasia*. Interpreting this "naturalist" section is somewhat easier if we follow Aristotle's lead and consider it in light of his more naturalistic works such as *On the Motion of Animals* and *On the Soul*.[70]

[70] See Destrée (2007) and Charles (2007) who offer similar justifications for considering 7.3 in light of Aristotle's these other works.

The "naturalist" explanation of *akrasia* offers an account of how thought and desire lead to action. As in *On the Motion of Animals* and *On the Soul*, Aristotle uses practical syllogisms to explain the action. He focuses first on the thought process, describing the practical syllogism in terms of a "universal" (or major) premise that is a general opinion (X's are good, I want X), and a "particular" (or minor) premise that is informed by sense-perception (here is an X). When the universal and the particular premise lead to a conclusion, the person acts. Again, it is noteworthy that Aristotle does not posit an independent will, but instead says that the person acts once the syllogism of the opinion and sense-perception is complete: "when a conclusion comes from them [the universal and particular premises], it is necessary (ἀνάγκη) then for the soul to affirm it [the conclusion], and in the case of a conclusion regarding doing something, [it is necessary] for one to act at once" (NE 1147a26-28). To clarify this explanation of action, Aristotle provides a simplified example of someone fond of sweets: the general opinion (or premise) in this case is that "one ought to taste everything that is sweet" (1147a29). The particular premise is satisfied when the person sees a sweet. If there are no other relevant opinions or concerns, a calculation is made as to how to attain the sweet, and when the person has decided on the best available means, he acts to achieve the end.

While this is a simplistic example, it is useful to pause on it and point out that the opinion regarding sweet things relies on a chain of increasingly general premises that ultimately point back to an idea of what is good. That is, as discussed above, Aristotle claims that all acts in some way aim at the good, and so he is not describing here a free-standing opinion that abstractly declares "sweet things ought to be tasted." Rather,

sweetness is understood to be in some way good. While the connection might be obvious, Aristotle makes it clear in the next example: whereas in the first example Aristotle uses the opinion that "one ought to taste everything that is sweet," in the next example he uses a more general premise that "every sweet thing is pleasant" (1147a32). When one recalls that Aristotle includes the pleasant among the different conceptions of the good or apparent good (NE 1104b30-31, cf. MA 700b28-29), one can identify the full chain of thought.[71] This is not to say that the person consciously draws out all of these premises, but it is helpful to see the *implicitly* held beliefs in order to understand the motivation behind the action.[72] Looking at the sweets example, then, one can map out the premises as follows (bracketed premises are implicit):

	Action:
Major Premises:	[(1) One ought to seek what is good,]
	[(2) pleasure is good,]
	(3) "every sweet thing is pleasant,"
	(4) "one ought to taste everything that is sweet."
Minor Premise:	(perception) This is a sweet thing
Conclusion:	I shall taste the sweet thing.
	[Deliberation of means leads to action]

[71] In connecting the pleasant with the good, I am diverging from commentators who make a radical division between the two. For example, Irwin (1980) says that *akrasia* is "a conflict between a desire based on an overall assessment of an object as good or bad and a desire not based on such an assessment" (p. 127). While rational desire may include a more clear-sighted assessment of what is good, my argument is that even simple desires include an implicit overall premise: namely, that the pleasant as such is good (cf. Destrée (2007), p.150-151).

[72] Burger (2008) regards the syllogistic opinions in 7.3 as bare statements (commands or prohibitions), saying that they do not connect to a view of the agent's good (pp. 142-144). By contrast, I am arguing that the desire for the sweet is connected to a broader view of one's ultimate good—namely, the idea that pleasure is the basis of one's happiness.

To make the example a more realistic presentation of choice, one would have to draw out a more complicated series of different ends, relating and ranking the ends into a coherent whole linked back to a broader conception of the good. The problematic case of *akrasia* emerges only when there are contradictory opinions or premises that prevent such a coherent ordering. Aristotle offers an example of this conflict, supposing in addition to the opinion favoring sweets that there is also present "a universal premise that forbids tasting [sweet things]" (1147a31-32). This premise could take the form of: 'one ought to avoid sweet things.' Aristotle does not explain why the sweets are forbidden in this case, but if health or dignified restraint is the general concern behind the prohibition, one could map out a potential conflict as follows (presenting a simple, immediate desire for pleasure versus a more complex commitment to moderation):

Major Premises:	[(1) One ought to seek what is good]	
	[(2) pleasure is good]	[(2′) nobility is good]
		(3′) to be noble is to be moderate
	(3) "every sweet thing is pleasant"	(4′) moderation requires limiting indulgence in bodily pleasures not necessary for health
		(5′) the pleasure of eating sweets is an unnecessary bodily pleasure
	(4) "one ought to taste everything that is sweet"	(6′) Therefore, one ought not eat sweets
Minor Premise:	(Perception) This is a sweet thing	
Conclusion:	I shall taste this sweet thing.	I shall avoid this sweet thing.

There is not a necessary contradiction between these competing premises, as they could be combined in an ordered synthesis. When making a choice, one must confront the different possible ends and rank the possibilities in terms of a greater good. In this instance, one could admit that the sweet would be a good, but nevertheless decide that moderation or physical health is more important than momentary pleasure. On the other hand, one could limit one's indulgence to certain occasions, granting a place for the pleasure of sweets while still generally pursuing a healthy, moderate life. In the case of *akrasia*, however, there is a failure to make such a deliberation effective. The person might give an argument for the importance of restraint, but he nevertheless acts for the sake of pleasure. The question is why? Why does the person act on one practical syllogism rather than the other?

Aristotle explains the *akrasia* by focusing on the role of desire and how it affects the practical syllogisms. In the abstract, the two practical syllogisms stand in balance, but what seems to differ is the immediacy of the desires associated with the opinions concerning pleasure and restraint. Specifically, after describing the competing major premises—one forbidding sweets, the other leading to sweets—Aristotle links the particular premise ('this is sweet') with the premises regarding pleasure, saying that in this case, the minor premise is "active" (ἐνεργεῖ), and he notes that an appetitive desire (ἐπιθυμία) is present (1147a33). In this case of an "active" premise and a desire, the person pursues the sweet: "while the one premise says to avoid this, the appetite takes the lead, since it is able to set in motion each part of the body" (1147a34-35). While it not yet clear how the one premise becomes "active," it is crucial to keep in mind that the desire is

not isolated from and acting against one's thoughts and opinions, which is the claim of common experience. Instead, Aristotle points out that *akrasia* comes from "a proposition (λόγος), in a way, and opinion" (1147b1). What he means is that, while the desire for the sweet stands in opposition to an opinion forbidding sweets, the desire itself is linked with a whole series of opinions or premises regarding what is pleasant. Furthermore, that the desire ultimately connects with a conception of the good (namely, pleasure) means that the person is not simply acting on the basis of desire against a view of the good. The question still stands, however, as to why exactly the person acts on the one conception of what is good over the other. It is also not completely clear how desire affects the decision.

Many interpreters argue that desire acts independently, introducing a competing syllogism against what is otherwise "known" to be good (such as health or moderation).[73] The general problem with this line of interpretation is that it treats thought and desire as

[73] Most notably, in his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, Thomas of Aquinas treats desire ("concupiscence") as acting independently of reason, both proposing and accepting the premises to pursue the pleasant thing (§1345-8). Note that Thomas also claims that reason is at fault as it fails to "resist" the activity of desire. Other commentators who see desire as proposing syllogisms include Sachs (2002), who says that desire "substitutes" a missing premise (p. 124, FN 187). Similarly, Burger (2008) says that desire, "having clothed itself as a contrary universal rule, becomes a major premise in his reasoning," which then combines with the particular premise to move the person (p. 142). In fairness to these positions, it must be noted that Aristotle does say in MA 701a31 that "the activity of desire" can take the place of thought in very automatic responses such as the thirst example he uses in the context. My argument, however, is that desire can "substitute" for thought in a practical syllogism because desire is itself a form of thought (see the discussion above of S 431a8-16).

more separate than they actually are, not recognizing their essential connection.[74] More immediately, it needs to be stressed that Aristotle first describes the syllogism regarding what is pleasant before introducing desire; this suggests that the thought or belief that "sweets are pleasant" is already present before the immediate desire exerts its force. The immediate desire does not by itself *create* the competing syllogism; rather, it in some way determines or tilts the balance between the competing opinions and desires oriented toward the ultimate notion of what is good.

Another line of interpretation more properly focuses on the "particular" premise of the competing syllogisms, addressing how desire makes the one premise "active." The thing to note about the competing syllogisms is that they share the same particular premise, namely, the perception that 'this is a sweet thing.' Many interpreters argue that desire 'pulls' or 'shifts' the particular premise away from the restraint syllogism, causing the unrestrained person to perceive the sweet *only* as pleasant rather than unhealthy.[75]

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[74] Like Sachs (2002) and Burger (2008) previously noted, Burnet (1901) claims that desire in some way introduces a competing syllogism, but he suggests that thought plays a role in desire's activity. Specifically, he argues that thought *generalizes* the particular end of a desire, meaning that the end is extended to a universal proposition. In this way, he says, thought makes explicit the "universal implicit in particular desires" (p. 302). This is a strong argument, but it still treats desire and thought as overly separate. As discussed above regarding S 431a8-16, Aristotle notes that desires already contain thought and a notion that what is desired is pleasant.

[75] There are many different accounts of how desire affects perception, but the common conclusion is that there is a temporary blindness or ignorance such that the person sees the sweet as pleasant, but does not see it as unhealthy. See, for example, Joachim (1951), pp. 224-228, Santas (1969), p. 185, Cooper (1975), p. 50, and Rowe & Brodie (2002), pp. 390-393. Destrée (2007) is particularly worth consulting as he has the most nuanced account of the role of desire, drawing from *On the Soul* to explain how appetite influences imagination and perception. He argues that

This interpretation is generally consistent with Aristotle's discussion of *akrasia*. Towards the end of 7.3, Aristotle focuses on the "last premise" (ἡ τελευταία πρότασις), by which he means the most particular major premise: he calls it "an opinion regarding the object of perception" (1147b9-10), which is the opinion that the sweet is a pleasant or an unhealthy thing. In *akrasia*, Aristotle explains, the person is in some way ignorant of the particular premise: "either he does not have this [last premise] *or* he has it in such a way that his having it does not amount to his knowing it; instead he merely speaks, as a drunk man states the sayings of Empedocles" (1147b10-12, my emphasis). The 'temporary blindness' interpretation can explain the first part of this description: while the unrestrained person generally knows what is bad, he is momentarily so moved by his immediate desire that he fails to see the particular object before him as bad; instead, he only sees the object as pleasant. This interpretation understands *akrasia* as similar to that of a person failing to link a particular with a universal (see 1147a1-8), and it might explain the impetuous or rash sort of *akrasia* (see 1150b19-22). However, this interpretation does not account for the more problematic case of when a person claims to act despite actively *knowing* that the act is bad. It is not quite right to say, then, that the person was blind or unaware that the sweet was actually unhealthy. It is thus still necessary to explain how the person can hold a premise without really knowing it.

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appetite shapes the imagination such that the sweet is presented as a pleasant good rather than an unhealthy thing from which one must abstain (pp. 151-155).

Commentators correctly see that two potential syllogisms are at work in *akrasia*, but I think they are too quick to focus on only one syllogism as complete. Burnet (1901), for example, raises the right question regarding *akrasia*: "The problem of *akrasia* therefore assumes this form: 'Is it possible for a syllogism, the conclusion of which is a bad act, to exist side by side with the knowledge of the major premiss or practical principle which that violates?'" (pp. 302-3). He concludes, however, that a person cannot have two contradictory propositions coexisting in his soul (p. 303). Similarly, Wiggins (1980) says that "the two syllogisms cannot struggle, because they cannot coexist—even for one moment" (p. 250). By contrast, I believe that *akrasia* relies precisely on the fact that people can in some way hold contradictory opinions. The inconsistency in *akrasia* is present because the person is confused as to which end is truly good—or rather, the confusion is regarding which end is the better end to pursue in a given moment. A person judges particulars in light of universals, and in the struggle of *akrasia*, the unrestrained person is judging the particular premise (the sweet) in light of two competing ends: he is seeing the sweet as both a pleasant thing and an ignoble or unhealthy thing.[76] In pursuing the sweet, the person is revealing that he believes that the immediate pleasure is more important than nobility or long term health. Another way of saying this is that the person

[76] While I disagree with her explanation of *akrasia* (desire clothing itself as a universal rule), I nevertheless think that Burger (2008) makes a very important observation: in *akrasia*, "perhaps … there is no possibility of registering a neutral judgment of fact not already colored by one opinion or another about the crucial property of the object as choiceworthy or not. The 'final premise,' in that case, would be a judgment of the particular that incorporates one universal predicate or the other…. The person in whom a struggle is going on might move from one perception of the situation to the other *or even hold both together*" (p. 143, my emphasis).

does actually believe that health or moderation is good (he does not wholly reject these ends), but in choosing the sweet, he is revealing that, for the moment at least, he believes that pleasure is a greater good. The general problem is that there is a tension between the competing syllogisms, and in the present context, the balance is determined by the appetitive desire. In other contexts when the desire is not present or as strong, the person will choose health and abstain from sweets. I think this role of desire is what Aristotle means when he says that the particular premise of the pleasure syllogism is "active" (1147a33): immediate desire gives more weight or presence to the potential pleasure of the sweet, which makes its unhealthiness seem less important.

Aristotle's brief discussion of *akrasia* in *On the Soul* supports this interpretation. In the *On the Soul* passage, Aristotle clarifies the decision that is made in *akrasia*. When a person acts for the sake of an immediate desire rather than for another end, he is choosing an immediate good over a distant and possibly abstract good because the immediate good *seems more real*. As Aristotle puts it, "what is immediately pleasant appears to be both simply pleasant and *simply good* on account of not looking to the future" (S 433b8-10, my emphasis). In the *Ethics*, Aristotle likens *akrasia* to drunkenness. When drunk, a person has less foresight such that he will not sufficiently appreciate a distant good and he will instead give much more credence to an immediate or apparent good. Similarly, under the influence of a strong desire, the unrestrained person focuses on the immediate good, not appreciating the weight or reality of the more

distant good.[77] He may be able to give an argument regarding the importance of moderation—and he may generally believe that it is an important thing—but his actions reveal that pleasure is more immediately important to him.

So, regarding the "apparent phenomena" or the *akratic*'s claim to knowledge (e.g. 'I *know* moderation is better, but I was overcome by desire, acting against my judgment'), Aristotle calls into question the status of this "knowledge." Earlier in 7.3, Aristotle said that the person "both has [knowledge] in a way and does not have it" (1147a13-14), and at the end he suggests that the *akratic* "has it in such a way that his having it does not amount to his knowing it" (1147b11-12). The "knowledge," then, seems to be a proposition that the person believes but does not *fully* believe. In the *akratic*, this weak form of 'knowledge' is susceptible to being "dragged around by passion" (1147b16-17). By contrast, Aristotle highlights another kind of knowledge, "knowledge in the authoritative sense" (1147b15). Commentators take this "authoritative knowledge" merely to be the knowledge of universals that is untouched by *akrasia*,[78] but

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[77] Joachim (1951) makes a valuable observation along these lines. After making his major argument that the unrestrained person does not see the particular premise of health, he briefly grants another possibility: "or, if he does know that this is a case of the [universal] principle, this knowledge is a vague memory of what he once fully realized, *not the vivid consciousness* made operative by an actual perception." And he later adds, "his knowledge of the universal [pleasure]—his major premiss—is not merely particularized into 'This is sweet and therefore pleasant' in the sense of a vague memory. It is *made vivid* and operative by the activity of his ἐπιθυμία, his present appetite for this pleasant thing" (p. 228, my emphases). Destrée (2007) makes a similarly brief concession that the difference in *akrasia* may be the vividness of competing perceptions (pp. 160-161).

[78] See note 75 above.

I believe Aristotle is referring to a stable form of knowledge that is held by one who does not give in to *akrasia*. This is the knowledge he referred to earlier after claiming that *akratics* do not fully possess knowledge: "one must grow into the knowledge and that requires time" (1147a22).

Fully interpreting what Aristotle means by "authoritative" knowledge or how one "grows" into it would require a much broader discussion of the *Ethics*, but I will offer a few remarks. What is most immediately problematic in the person possessing this hollow, shifting "knowledge" that gives way to *akrasia* is the lack of stable desire. This stability requires the character formation discussed in Book II of the *Ethics*: one needs to learn how to make deliberate choices rather than simply pursuing any pleasure or immediate good that one perceives. At first this character training will involve simple habituation, doing what is expected and enforced by others, but over time, one will internalize the rules and learn to act by oneself.[79] However, this basic form of training is not enough—by itself it leads to a stubborn, even dogmatic, steadfastness in which a person might pursue a proper end, *not* because of a reasoned account of his good, but because of the

[79] In this regard, I agree with Burnyeat (1980) and Charles (2007) who argue that character formation is essential to overcoming *akrasia*. Both of these authors, like many commentators, use this point to distance Aristotle from Socrates, who they interpret as saying intellect alone is all that is required. As I mentioned above, Socrates's comments in the *Protagoras* and *Meno* are meant as provocative challenges. It should suffice to note that in other contexts, Socrates does stress something very akin to character formation. See, for example, the discussion of education reform in the *Republic*: the goal of these reforms is to inculcate a sense of what is noble and a hatred for what is base (see 401d5-402a4).

conventional opinions instilled in him. Lacking a clear view of his good, this person would also be prone to some form of *akrasia*.[80]

My interpretation of 7.3 suggests that the inconsistency in desire is related to inconsistency in thought, meaning that the *akratic* has conflicting, contradictory opinions regarding the good. Because of the conflict in his opinions, the person is inconsistent and has unstable ends: when inflamed by the senses, the desire for the immediate good is strongest, but at other times, the person will act in accordance to a more long term idea of the good that includes such concerns as health and moderation. Acquiring "authoritative" knowledge requires examining one's opinions and rooting out the contradictions, trying to order one's thoughts into a more coherent whole. This is to say that truly "authoritative" knowledge would ultimately require a dialectical study of what is good.[81] Furthermore, it is not enough merely to learn arguments like a student reciting "demonstrations and verses" (see NE 1147a20, b12). Rather, one must engage in the activity of making choices based on this knowledge. Aristotle's description of choice

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[80] While Aristotle focuses on lack of restraint regarding pleasure in 7.3, he considers other forms of *akrasia* in 7.4-6, focusing on those who lack restraint regarding spirited desires. Such people resist giving in to desires for pleasure because they are instead moved by their desire for honor and reputation. Aristotle defends this latter form of *akrasia*. However, he does so only by reverting to a simpler, bipartite psychology (see 1149b1-2: "spiritedness follows reason in a way, but desire does not") and by noting that, whereas *akrasia* is usually condemned, people do not *blame* thumotic *akrasia* to the same extent (1148a2-4, 1149b4-6). This tempered defense of thumotic *akrasia* suggests that Aristotle accepts that it is a politically preferable form of *akrasia*, but it does not rise to the level of actual virtue.

[81] On Aristotle's notion of dialectics as an examination of opinions meant to root out contradictions, see 1.1 of the *Topics*.

suggests that a person's desires will become more stable as he makes deliberate choices. The person must consider his opinions, actively deliberating about what he believes is good, and he must make choices based on these deliberations. The *On the Soul* passage (S 433b8-10) regarding *akrasia* discussed above suggests that the gradual effect of deliberate choice is that broader goods will no longer seem so distant or abstract; instead, the person will better appreciate the reality of these goods and so they will not be so readily eclipsed by immediate goods that are otherwise taken to be "simply good." In this context, it should also be noted that while Aristotle presents an ideal of desire perfectly harmonizing with reason (1119b15-18), there might always be some struggle or lack of harmony because of desires for immediate goods or pleasures that conflict with a longer term good. Presumably part of good character is the repeated experience of resisting rash decisions and being aware of the danger of the 'temporary blindness' mentioned above, wherein one focuses too much on an immediate good, ignoring more distant goods.

More could be said about character formation, but for present purposes, the major point is that to avoid *akrasia*, a person needs to have a knowledge that is reflected in his thoughts and desires. That is, the knowledge that something is good does not consist in abstract thought alone: as Aristotle says, "speaking the words that come from knowledge signifies nothing" (1147a18-19). Rather, the "authoritative" knowledge Aristotle refers to is a stable combination of thought and desire wherein one consistently thinks something

is good and longs for it. This seems to be what Aristotle means when he says "one must grow into the knowledge, and this requires time" (1147a22).[82]

In light of this analysis of *akrasia*, I believe that Aristotle's agreement with Socrates is much closer than is usually granted. Specifically, Aristotle concludes that Socrates was correct in a fundamental sense: the weakness or unrestraint of *akrasia* is not truly an instance of one acting contrary to knowledge in the fullest sense. Rather, the unrestrained person is acting on a certain idea of the good and he is following a set of premises, flawed though they may be. I have been considering very difficult passages, but the basic claim supporting the Socratic position is that people always act according to their conception of the good; in instances where they seem to do otherwise, it is because they have conflicting opinions based on competing conceptions of the good. Put even more simply, it can be said that people act in inconsistent ways because they have confused, contradictory opinions, which are reflected in their confused, contradictory desires. It is in these instances that people "both possess and do not possess knowledge" (1147a13).

To return to the broader issue of action and choice, this explanation of *akrasia* is important for drawing out aspects of Aristotelian psychology. In particular, the account of

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[82] A confirmation of this interpretation of knowledge that one "grows into" can be found in *On the Soul* when Aristotle distinguishes between two types of knower. One is only a knower "in potency," whereas the other is an active knower. Aristotle describes the latter sort of knowledge as an activity (ἐνέργεια) that is achieved when a person "has been altered by learning and has *changed often* from the contrary condition" (see S 417a21–b2, my emphasis). On the need of repeated activity for knowledge, it is worth considering Plato's *Meno* 85c5-d1 and 97d6-98a8.

akrasia helps demonstrate the syllogistic character of decision-making and it also makes sense of what Aristotle means when he says that all choices aim at some conception of the good. The discussion of the akratic choice indicates why ends can be unstable, but it also suggests how choice is made as one decides between competing ends. In addition to the present discussion of *akrasia*, what needs to be kept in mind from the sections above is that in the syllogistic process of action, each premise consists of thought and desire together. Thought is not simply instrumental, following the ends posed by desire; rather, thought is also constitutive of the ends of action. Taken together, these points help draw out both the deeper rationality of action and the potential for irrational or confused action. Having discussed the core concepts in Aristotle's psychological account of action, we can now turn to consider the relevance of Aristotelian psychology to rhetoric.

IV. Towards a Psychology of Persuasion

The overview offered in this chapter was meant to serve as a detailed introduction of the major concepts in Aristotelian psychology, especially in Aristotle's discussion of the psychology of choice and action. While the issues discussed are theoretically interesting in their own right—and they already go some way towards correcting the notion that rationality is solely instrumental—these psychological concepts will also be very helpful for understanding how rhetoric works and its place in politics. For instance, the mutual role of thought and desire in action is very relevant to understanding the potential for persuasion. When we understand the broader, constitutive role of thought in action, we can better appreciate how an audience can be engaged through rhetoric and

how the ends of action can be informed by persuasive appeal. There is thus greater room for understanding how rhetoric can be a part of actual guidance and leadership rather than mere pandering or manipulation. Furthermore, while Aristotle's account of action will be especially relevant to understanding the *content* of rhetoric, it will also help us understand the role of style in rhetoric or how that content is presented. In particular, the analysis of *akrasia* highlights how competing ends may be at work in action and the reason why these ends may be unstable; this lesson will in turn allow us to understand how rhetoric can focus the audience on, and give special weight to, one end over another.

With all of that said, before turning to the underlying psychology and potential of rhetoric in Chapter 3, it is necessary to be clear first as to what rhetoric actually is. Accordingly, I will offer in the next chapter an overview of the *Rhetoric* and the concepts Aristotle introduces for the study of rhetoric.

CHAPTER 2: AN OVERVIEW OF ARISTOTLE'S *RHETORIC*

In this chapter I begin my investigation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. I will start with the most basic question: What is rhetoric? In a neutral sense, rhetoric is simply persuasive speech, or more specifically, it is speech aimed at influencing judgment. Rhetoric, however, is more often seen as a matter of pandering or manipulating an audience. In this negative case, rhetoric is contrasted with the direct statement of truth, which leads to the question: Why doesn't the speaker simply rely on rational argument to demonstrate the truth? This negative view of rhetoric reflects suspicions that reach back to antiquity, when rhetoric was sometimes associated with "unjust speech" and "making the weaker speech stronger." Interestingly, even though Aristotle is known as a defender of rhetoric, he echoes these suspicions in the *Rhetoric*. Indeed, it must be noted that he only offers a *qualified* defense of rhetoric. That is, Aristotle is also very critical of many forms of rhetoric, but in describing his own conception of how rhetoric works, Aristotle offers a publically defensible form of rhetoric.

To address the primary question of what rhetoric is, I present in this chapter an overview of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the terms it introduces for understanding persuasive speech. In particular, I must give an extended explanation of Aristotle's concept of the enthymeme. Aristotle frequently emphasizes the importance of the enthymeme in rhetoric, but the traditional interpretation of the enthymeme as an incomplete syllogism is entirely inadequate for understanding what Aristotle actually means by the term and why he sees it as so important for rhetoric. My argument is that, rather than being a mere logical device, the enthymeme also provides the basis for all forms of rhetorical appeal,

including emotional and ethical appeals. For this reason, Aristotle uses the concept to describe the way in which rhetoric can speak to and move the whole soul rather than rational understanding alone.

Gaining clarity on the enthymeme is also helpful for understanding the broader character of human rationality and the interrelation of thought and desire. In rhetoric, emotional appeals offer one of the more powerful means of persuasion. Indeed, rhetoricians before Aristotle treated emotional appeals as the primary component of effective rhetoric, and because of the power of these appeals, they described rhetoric as operating like a drug or magic charm that takes over the listener. The problem with likening speech to drugs and charms is that these sorts of metaphor fail to indicate how *speech* can have such a powerful influence over the seemingly irrational emotions. An important insight of Aristotle's analysis of the emotions (which will be discussed in the next chapter) is the constitutive role of thought in the emotions—Aristotle describes the emotions as being based in part on certain premises of thought. This analysis helps explain how the emotions are open to being influenced by speech. The enthymeme, in turn, is Aristotle's way of explaining how rhetoric is structured to influence the emotions and other aspects of the soul. A clear understanding of the enthymeme is thus crucial to a consideration of the relationship between Aristotelian psychology and rhetoric, which I take up further in the next chapter.

As I address Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric, I must also confront a common approach to interpreting the *Rhetoric*. This approach is generally found in classicist or

philological readings, but to capture more clearly the nature of this interpretive approach, I will refer to it as the "biographical reading" of Aristotle's work. This reading claims that the *Rhetoric* is not a coherent text. Rather, according to this view, the *Rhetoric* is a poorly edited pastiche consisting of segments written at different points in Aristotle's life—segments which ultimately reveal contradictory views of rhetoric. I will begin by confronting this reading—not only because it challenges my understanding of the coherence of the text, but also because the biographical reading has led to several pervasive misunderstandings of the *Rhetoric*, especially regarding the enthymeme.

I. The Biographical Reading of the *Rhetoric*

The biographical reading is a common approach to studying Aristotle's works that involves interpreting individual texts in light of theories regarding Aristotle's intellectual development. These theories attempt to trace the development of ideas across Aristotle's existing works in order to construct a timeline in which one might then date the individual texts. To aid this effort, the timeline is constructed with reference to a similar attempt to date Plato's intellectual development: the argument is that, as Plato's student, Aristotle originally adhered to Plato's teachings, but over time Aristotle became increasingly independent in his own thinking, distancing himself from Plato's thought.

Within the *Rhetoric*, it is argued that one can see three distinct stages in Aristotle's outlook. In the first stage, he was very critical of traditional rhetoric and accepted only rational, logical forms of argumentation. This narrow view of rhetoric corresponds to what is seen as Plato's early condemnation of rhetoric as expressed in the

Gorgias. Many scholars argue that Plato's *Phaedrus* marks a shift in Plato's stance towards rhetoric—that in endorsing an ideal art of rhetoric conceived as a "leading of the soul" (see 270b ff.) in the dialogue, Plato demonstrates a limited acceptance of rhetoric. It is argued that Aristotle followed this turn in Plato's thought, coming, in this second stage, to see the need to speak to all aspects of the soul, and so he accepted the legitimacy of non-rational arguments such as emotional appeals. The third stage corresponds to what is seen as Aristotle's turning away from Platonic idealism to the empiricism one finds in his later biological works. In this stage, Aristotle looked to the actual practice of rhetoricians and came to accept the need for stylistic arrangement and delivery in rhetoric.[83]

The textual basis within the *Rhetoric* used to support this biographical reading derives, first of all, from the seemingly contradictory stances adopted in the work's introductory chapters. In the first chapter, Aristotle condemns previous rhetoricians for their focus on non-rational techniques, and he instead focuses exclusively on the need for a rational basis to persuasion. Immediately afterwards, however, in the second chapter Aristotle gives equal status to non-rational appeals, thereby accepting the practices he just rejected. This second chapter is seen as a representation of a later, more mature view of rhetoric, whereas the first chapter reflects Aristotle's younger, more idealistic understanding. Beyond the opening chapters, it is also argued that the overall chapter structure of the work reveals contradictory views of rhetoric. After the problematic

[83] On theories regarding the development of Aristotle's thought on rhetoric, see Kennedy (1963) pp. 82-87, Fortenbaugh (1975, 1991), Rist (1989), and Kennedy (2007).

introductory chapters, the rest of Book I and the final chapters of Book II (2.18-2.25) focus on rational appeals, but these chapters are interrupted by a discussion of emotional and character appeals (2.1-2.17). Because they seem to break the flow of the discussion of rational appeal, these latter chapters are seen as additions clumsily inserted into an earlier work. Furthermore, because these chapters do not offer examples of rhetorical speeches, it is thought that they were imported from a different work on psychology and inserted into the *Rhetoric* without being sufficiently tailored to the text. Finally, Book III, which focuses on style and delivery of speeches, is viewed as an afterthought not directly relating to the Books I and II, and so it too is thought to have been appended to the text at a later date.[84]

Because of the conflicting stances regarding rational and non-rational forms of appeal, and also because of the work's seemingly incoherent structure, many scholars view the *Rhetoric* as a mere compilation of various lectures that Aristotle composed at different points in his life. Some think that Aristotle himself brought the lectures together, hastily making only a few revisions and cross-references to give a semblance of order.[85] Other scholars go further, claiming that the *Rhetoric* was compiled by later editors. For

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[84] Apart from structural interpretation, there is one piece of external evidence of the claim that Book III was written separately: In his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (5.24), Diogenes Laertius says that the *Rhetoric* consisted of two books, suggesting that Book III was originally a separate work. However, even if this is correct (Diogenes was writing several centuries after Aristotle), this evidence does not necessarily imply that there is a conflict between Book III and the earlier parts of the *Rhetoric*.

[85] See, for example, Kennedy (1996) p. 420 and Barnes (1995).

example, McAdon (2004) argues that the *Rhetoric* is "a compilation of originally separate texts that have been (confusedly) reworked into what we now have" (p. 322).[86]

A major problem with this biographical approach to interpretation is that there is very little evidence available for verifying conjectural accounts of intellectual development. We simply lack sufficient biographical information on most ancient thinkers, which means that the only real access we have to their thought is through their writings. Reliance on a speculative biographical timeline runs the risk of misrepresenting the primary texts, as the interpreter imposes his own views as to what constitutes mature or complex thought. That said, even if some works were accurately identified as more complex—or, for that matter, even if we had an accurate dating of every work—the timeline approach ignores the question of the author's intention. It is entirely possible that the author chose to present simpler concepts in a particular context, or that he had deliberate reasons for, say, presenting tensions within an account that would need to be resolved through subsequent interpretation. Of course, inferring intent is also speculative. The ultimate standard for an interpretation is whether it actually squares with the text of the work, and it is here that the biographical reading fails: the developmental timeline of Aristotle's thought is constructed by faulty readings of individual texts. The key, then, to

[86] McAdon goes still further in a later paper (2006), conjecturing that the *Rhetoric* was not completely written by Aristotle. Rather, it is likely a "cut-and-paste" compilation of many separate works by Aristotle and Theophrastus (Aristotle's student and eventual successor in the Lyceum). This compilation was subsequently corrupted by poor manuscript care until it was reorganized and canonized by Andronicus (the leader of the Roman Peripatetic school in the first century BC).

disproving the biographical reading is to demonstrate how the text has been misconstrued.

In the previous chapter, for example, I discussed Aristotelian psychology. As noted, some scholars attribute a bipartite psychology to Aristotle, and they divide Aristotle's work according to the complexity of his psychological views, arguing that *On the Soul* contains his mature thought, whereas the *Nicomachean Ethics* has an earlier, cruder view of psychology.[87] The critical flaw with this interpretation is that it simply ignores the cautionary language Aristotle uses in his presentation, especially in his claim that he is relying on simpler notions from "popular accounts" (ἐξωτερικοῖς λόγοις, 1102a27) because they are adequate for the immediate purpose of speaking to practically minded statesmen. Moreover, if one carefully attends to the discussion of psychology throughout the *Ethics*, instead of dismissing it as crude and undeveloped, one can see that the discussions of psychology in the *Ethics* and *On the Soul* actually complement each other. My discussion of *akrasia* in the previous chapter serves as an example of how Aristotle ultimately presents a consistent understanding of psychology across his different works.

The biographical reading of the *Rhetoric* is similarly flawed. To the extent that such a reading is built upon an interpretation of Plato's intellectual development, it must

[87] See section I of the previous chapter. On the biographical reading of Aristotelian psychology, see Oswald (1962), Fortenbaugh (1975, 1991), and Rist (1989).

first be noted that this latter theory relies on a poor understanding of Plato's works. Regarding Plato's view of rhetoric, if one pays sufficient attention to the dialogic discussion in the *Gorgias*, one can see that Plato is not actually entirely critical of rhetoric; this observation in turn calls into question the idea that the *Phaedrus* necessarily expresses a later, more mature understanding of rhetoric.[88] In turn, when one sees that Plato accepted certain forms of rhetoric, one can see that Aristotle's treatment is not as radically different from Plato's as it is often made out to be.[89] To the extent, however, that a biographical reading of the *Rhetoric* is based upon textual evidence, an adequate response requires delving into the text itself. Given that the major evidence used for the biographical reading is the seeming contradictions and inconsistencies in the work, it is necessary to demonstrate the coherence of Aristotle's arguments. If one can see the underlying unity of the text and explain the coherence of the alleged contradictions, then there is little reason to dismiss the work as a confused mixture of incomplete lectures. I will therefore turn now to the text itself, offering an interpretation of the work that challenges the biographical reading of the *Rhetoric*.

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[88] On Socrates's (and Plato's) complicated criticism and acceptance of rhetoric, see Stauffer (2006).

[89] For discussions of the relation of the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, see Lord (1981) and Nichols (1987).

II. Aristotle's Introduction to Rhetoric: The Limits of Logical Argument

The opening chapters of the *Rhetoric* offer an introduction to Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric, but they are marked by the sharp contrast noted above: in the first chapter, Aristotle seems to equate proper rhetoric with logical argument alone, rejecting all other ways of influencing judgment, but in the next chapter, he endorses the use of the non-rational appeals he just condemned. This divergence is used to argue that the *Rhetoric* is incoherent, though it is odd that few commentators have tried to explain how Aristotle—or any editor for that matter—could miss such a glaring contradiction. In what follows, I argue that Aristotle was aware of the contrast between these chapters. This is the reason that Aristotle ends the first chapter calling for a new introduction in which he will start again, "as if from the beginning" (1355b24). I believe there is a development over the course of the introduction in which Aristotle first presents an ideal or exaggerated form of rhetoric and then tempers this idealization, preparing the way for a more realistic conception of rhetoric in the second chapter.[90]

Aristotle opens the *Rhetoric* with the sentence, "Rhetoric is the ἀντίστροφος of dialectic" (1354a1).[91] *Antistrophe* is a dramatic term referring to the chorus in a Greek play: in the strophe, the chorus moves in one direction, dancing and singing in a

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[90] In this regard, I agree with Brunschwig (1996, p.45) who calls 1.1 a "false start" that prepares the way for the "true start" in 1.2.

[91] This famous phrase has been the subject of an enormous variety of interpretations. See Green (1994) on the different interpretations that have been offered from classical times to the present.

particular meter, and in the antistrophe, the chorus moves back in the opposite direction, mirroring the dance and meter of the strophe. Antistrophe implies a complementary relationship and so it is usually translated as "counterpart" or "analogue." Much of the substance of chapters one and two involves a clarification—as well as a qualification—of the sense in which rhetoric is the *antistrophe* of dialectic.[92]

Because of the ambiguity of "antistrophe," it is helpful to consider first what Aristotle means by "dialectic." In the *Topics*, Aristotle describes dialectic as "a method by which we can reason about any problem posed by reputable opinions (ἔνδοξα) while also avoiding saying anything self-contradictory when we ourselves make arguments" (100a19-21). *Endoxa* are the common or reputable opinions held by everyone, by a majority, or by some other credible source, such as the famous or the wise (100b21-23). Because these opinions have been convincing to others, it is assumed that there is some degree of truth in them that merits investigation. Dialectic involves testing the opinions, trying to root out what is false in order to find sound, non-contradictory premises.[93] In focusing on opinions, dialectic is subordinate to the sciences (because the sciences look directly to nature to discover what is primary and true), but in another sense, dialectic is

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[92] In the *Gorgias*, Socrates criticizes rhetoric and calls it the "*antistrophe* of cookery" on the grounds that it is akin to flattery (see *Gorgias*, 465b-466a). By his choice of words, Aristotle is responding to Socrates' provocative challenge, announcing that he will show how rhetoric can be a rational art open to systematic study. For more on Aristotle's response to, and ultimate agreement with, the Socratic challenge to rhetoric, see Lord (1981).

[93] Aristotle's "naturalistic" analysis of *akrasia* in 7.3 of the *Ethics* could be considered a dialectical investigation and refinement of common and reputable opinions on the phenomenon of unrestraint (see the analysis in Section III of the previous chapter).

more foundational because it can investigate the assumptions and premises underlying the various sciences. Accordingly, Aristotle says that by testing and purifying opinions of their contradictions, dialectic can draw out the "first principles of all disciplines" (T 101b3-4).

Regarding Aristotle's claim that rhetoric is the *antistrophe* of dialectic, most interpreters think that by *antistrophe* Aristotle only means that rhetoric is roughly analogous to dialectic.[94] There are many points of equivalence: they both involve basic logic (induction and deduction), they are general arts in that they can be applied to the specific subject matter of other arts, and they give guidance for making effective arguments. A particularly important likeness is that both rhetoric and dialectic both rely on *endoxa*. However, whereas dialectic uses reputable opinions as a starting point for critical investigation, rhetoric generally accepts and works within these opinions. That is, rhetoric must appeal to common opinions and draw on their premises as something that the audience accepts as true. There are thus several points of rough analogy, but I believe that Aristotle goes further in the opening of the *Rhetoric*, suggesting that rhetoric should be a counterpart that follows the lead of dialectic just as the antistrophe follows the strophe. In dialectic, one focuses solely on the argument, offering proofs and refutations in order to arrive at the best argument. As *strophe*, then, dialectic investigates and purifies common opinions, and as *antistrophe*, rhetoric should return to the audience,

[94] See, for example, Green's (1994) survey of interpretations cited in fn. 91 above. See also Grimaldi (1980), p. 1-2, and Freese's (1926) Loeb introduction, p. xxxi.

justifying refined opinions in light of already accepted opinions. Such an effort would be an attempt to guide the audience towards truer opinions. When understood in light of the *Topics* and Aristotle's other philosophic writings, the opening *antistrophe* statement offers a brief glimpse of the highest form of rhetoric, namely what rhetoric can and should be when it is guided by philosophy. I will return to discuss this notion of rhetoric in the concluding chapter. In the immediate context of chapter one of the *Rhetoric*, however, the *antistrophe* analogy takes on a high-minded, even moralistic connotation, the suggestion being that rhetoric should only be a matter of presenting truth.

There are many examples in the *Rhetoric* of this initial, high-minded view. Aristotle says early on that rhetoric should focus only on truth in that it should be used only to try to show that something "is or is not so, or has or has not happened" (1354a28-29). Rhetoric should only be about proving facts, and in the first chapter Aristotle frequently dismisses other concerns as "extraneous" or "outside the subject" (1354a19, a25, b19, 1355a1, a20). For instance, he says that one should not use emotional appeals, as they involve "warping" the audience (1354a24), and he similarly criticizes the concern with stylistic delivery on the grounds that this is again a matter of influencing the audience's disposition rather than offering proof (1354b19). Finally, in support of an ideal form of rhetoric, Aristotle endorses laws that would prohibit orators from speaking "outside the subject," thereby preventing the use of extraneous, non-relevant speech (1354a18-b16).

Over the course of the opening chapter, however, Aristotle begins to treat rhetoric differently. Initially, rhetoric is presented as being properly concerned only with rational speech and all other means of persuasion are treated as illegitimate or "outside" the art, but towards the end of the chapter, Aristotle adopts a broader conception of rhetoric. Indeed, at the end of the chapter, Aristotle no longer links rhetoric with logical argument or dialectic alone, but he instead includes *all* forms of persuasion, saying more neutrally that the task (ἔργον) of rhetoric is "to see the available means of persuasion for each subject" (1355b10-11). What accounts for this dramatic shift, which occurs so very early in the text?[95]

The major reason for this shift is a substantive one: Aristotle has turned to discuss another key dimension of rhetoric, namely, the nature of the audience. Speeches will often be directed at large, general audiences, and there will likely be few in the audience who will be able to follow complex arguments. As Aristotle warns in the second chapter, one may often need to speak "to the kind of listeners who are not capable of bringing

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[95] In opposition to most commentators, Grimaldi (1972) and Arnhart (1981) argue that there is no real conflict at all between the opening chapters of the *Rhetoric*. Their argument is that throughout the rest of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle does not make a radical distinction between rational and emotional appeal, but instead shows how the different appeals can be combined. In light of this, they argue that in chapter one, Aristotle is not condemning all emotional appeal, but only those appeals that are completely divorced from rational appeal. While I am generally in agreement with Grimaldi and Arnhart, their arguments on this matter do not sufficiently attend to the rhetorical character of Aristotle's opening chapter. In particular, they do not adequately reflect the initial impression created by Aristotle's strong condemnations and exclusive focus on logical argumentation. Regarding the relation of the opening chapters, I am in closest agreement with Sprute (1994), who also claims that chapter one presents an ideal version of rhetoric directed towards an ideal audience, whereas the following chapters present a more realistic version of rhetoric.

many things together at once or of reasoning from a distant starting point" (1357a3-4). For such audiences, logical argument alone will not be sufficient. However, even if the listeners are reasonably intelligent, one would still be required to understand their potential biases and preconceptions. On this point, Aristotle later stresses that it is imperative to take note of the regime (1.8). Democracies offer the most opportunity for public speech and debate, but rhetoric in some form is required in all regimes—whether one is addressing an oligarchic council, an aristocratic court, or acting as an advisor to a king. In each case, Aristotle explains, one needs to understand the ends of those committed to the regime, and one will have to pay heed to biases in favor of ends such as freedom, wealth, tradition, or security (1366a2-6). The lofty rhetoric presented at the beginning of chapter one would require an ideal audience whose members are intelligent, experienced in public affairs, and entirely open-minded. In all other cases, however, the audience imposes limits on the speaker and he will have to attend to the audience accordingly. For these reasons, Aristotle grants that even if one had "the most precise knowledge" (1355a25), one would not necessarily be able to persuade an audience with knowledge alone.

This focus on the audience is an important development, because with it, Aristotle is highlighting the fact that there are limits on the degree to which rhetoric can rely on rational speech alone. Because of these limitations, it is necessary to use other means of persuasion as well. Aristotle makes this point several times in the *Rhetoric*, but a statement in the first chapter of Book III regarding stylistic arrangement particularly captures the shift from an ideal to a more realistic view of rhetoric:

> [A concern with style] is thought to be something vulgar, which captures it nobly, but since the whole business of rhetoric is directed at opinion, one has to make it [style] a matter of concern, not because it is just but because it is necessary. The just thing would be to aim at nothing more in a speech than that it not cause pain, but not cause pleasure either, since it is just to argue one's side by means of the facts themselves so that the other things extraneous to the demonstration are superfluous. But all the same, as has been said, these [other things] have a greater power owing to the corrupt condition of the listener" (1403b36-1404a8).

If the opening presentation of rhetoric is indeed idealized, we begin here to see the reason for Aristotle's approach. He begins with an emphasis on the rational (and not emotional or stylistic) dimensions of rhetoric in order to present an unambiguously defensible goal for rhetoric. As Aristotle grants later in chapter one, rhetoric as an art is neutral: it could be used to guide people to what is true, but it could also be used to mislead (1355b2-7). By presenting an idealized, rational goal for rhetoric, Aristotle is encouraging a civic use for rhetoric, suggesting that other means of persuasion should be used in service of rational speech, which by itself is limited in its persuasive power. With the support of other means of persuasion, however, rhetoric can be used to guide the audience members towards a truth that they might not otherwise accept. For instance, Aristotle initially dismisses emotional appeal on the grounds that it "warps" the audience and is thus akin to "making a straight-edged ruler crooked before using it" (1354a25-26). By contrast, he opens Book II by granting that it is necessary to be concerned with a

listener's disposition and one may need to "prepare" the listener's judgment by means of non-rational appeals (1377b24). This suggests that if one is not speaking to an ideal audience, if the audience is already 'warped' such that it is ill-disposed or otherwise unable to follow an argument, it may be necessary to use other means of persuasion to prepare or 'straighten' the audience, making listeners more akin to the ideal audience who would be able and willing to follow the rational argument.

The effort to link rhetoric with dialectic and thereby present a defensible form of rhetoric is related to one of the broader purposes of the *Rhetoric* as a whole. As chapter one makes clear, Aristotle is critical of previous rhetoricians, especially their emphasis on emotional appeals. One of the major problems of earlier rhetoric is that it became associated with the unjust use of speech. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle seeks to defend rhetoric, showing that it need not be pernicious but can actually be an art that is beneficial to the political community. With this goal in mind, I believe that Aristotle opens the *Rhetoric* in a rhetorical fashion, offering an exaggerated conception of rhetoric in order to distance himself from previous rhetoricians: at first he presents a lofty form of rhetoric, stressing its justness and respectability, but as the *Rhetoric* proceeds, he relaxes his conception of rhetoric, gradually accepting and rehabilitating rhetorical devices that had been given a bad name by earlier, sophistic forms of rhetoric.[96]

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[96] On the political purpose of the *Rhetoric* as a defense and guide for the use of respectable rhetoric, see Lord (1981). In this context it is worth noting that Isocrates, a rhetorician roughly contemporary with Aristotle, similarly attempted to distinguish his art from that of previous

It should not be surprising that the *Rhetoric* has a rhetorical character, but it is difficult to offer concrete proof. However, regarding the claim that the introduction is rhetorical, it is worth noting that such an opening is consistent with Aristotle's advice in 3.14 on introductions (*prooemia*) for defense speeches. Specifically, Aristotle says that it may be necessary for an introduction to serve a *remedial* purpose, clearing away prejudice before moving on to one's own speech (see 1415a25-39). Aristotle also notes that the introduction is especially helpful for establishing a suitable self-presentation, an important concern because the audience will be more receptive if one comes across as a "decent" (ἐπιεικῆ) person (1415a39). The opening chapter of the *Rhetoric* serves these defensive purposes quite well: in stressing justice and rationality, Aristotle presents himself as a decent, trustworthy person, and further, he distances his own presentation of rhetoric from the prejudice acquired by previous forms of rhetoric. With this accomplished, Aristotle starts chapter two "as if from the beginning," offering a new introduction with a more balanced conception of rhetoric.

While there is an obvious contrast between the opening two chapters of the *Rhetoric*, they need not be dismissed as contradictory because these dual-introductions serve a broader purpose: the exaggerated, idealized opening offers a view of the civic goal of rhetoric and it serves as an argument regarding the respectability of rhetoric as an art. However, to see the deeper consistency of the work, and to understand better

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rhetoricians, arguing that rhetoric can serve rather than corrupt politics. This point is especially clear in Isocrates's speech, *Against the Sophists*.

Aristotle's conception of rhetoric, it is necessary to turn to the "new beginning" offered in chapter two and consider how it relates to the rest of the text.

III. The Enthymeme and Other Concepts of Rhetoric

Aristotle opens the second chapter by defining rhetoric as "the ability to see (θεωρῆσαι) what is capable of being persuasive for each particular subject" (1355b25-26). This definition treats rhetoric as a theoretical art: rhetoric is characterized not by its successful *use* in persuasion, but rather by its capacity *to see* how an argument can be persuasive. In particular, the primary concern for rhetoric is the concept of *pistis* (pl. *pisteis*), a term that has a broad set of meanings related to persuasion: it can refer to the psychological state of belief or trust (having been persuaded); it can refer to the means of persuasion; and it can also mean more strongly a proof that is offered in order to persuade someone. Chapter two introduces quite a few technical concepts related to the *pisteis*, but these can be divided into two general categories: the means of persuasion that one might employ and the inferential form of reasoning that provides the basis of persuasive speech.

Aristotle first discusses the different means of persuasion, or the ways by which one attempts to persuade someone. There is a brief mention of the "unartful" (ἄτεχνοί) *pisteis*, meaning external evidence or facts that one might present in support of an argument (e.g. contracts, witness testimony), but Aristotle focuses on the "artful" (ἔντεχνοι) *pisteis*, those that are inherent to the art of speech or can only come through speech. The artful *pisteis* consist of rational appeal, emotional appeal, and character appeal; in classical rhetoric, these are referred to by their transliterated names of *logos*,

pathos, and *ethos*. Rational appeal is the most direct means of persuasion as it focuses on the subject matter itself, attempting to show that something is true or at least more likely to be true than any alternative. Emotional appeal involves putting the listener in a favorable disposition towards an argument. This is important because, as Aristotle notes, the emotions have a powerful effect on judgment (1356a15-16, 1377b24-28). Finally, character appeal involves presenting oneself in such a way that the audience is swayed by one's trustworthiness; this artful appeal does not come from a pre-established reputation, but rather through the speech itself, which should demonstrate the speaker's virtue, knowledge, and good will towards the audience (1377a6-8). These three artful *pisteis* describe the different ways by which a speech can move a listener to accept a certain position.

In the second part of the chapter, Aristotle begins a more technical discussion focusing on what he later calls the "common means of persuasion" (κοιναὶ πίστεις, 1393a24). As opposed to the artful *pisteis*, the common *pisteis* more generally concern the ways by which one demonstrates or establishes a particular point through speech (1356a36). The most significant point is that Aristotle says that there is an inferential basis to the *pisteis*: in the case of rhetorical induction, there is the "paradigm" (or "example," παράδειγμα), and in the more common case of rhetorical deduction, there is the "enthymeme."[97] Aristotle thus introduces the enthymeme as having a logical,

[97] Aristotle originally presents paradigms and enthymemes as equivalents, but because deductive reasoning is more common in rhetorical arguments, he discusses enthymemes far more often and

deductive basis. However, one of the more debated questions concerning the *Rhetoric* is whether the enthymeme is solely a logical form of argument (and thereby a subset of *logos*) or whether it can be present in all three forms of persuasion (*logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*).[98] This question might seem at first to be a trivial definitional debate, but it becomes extremely important because of the major role Aristotle gives to the enthymeme in the *Rhetoric*. Unfortunately, while one can quickly see the inadequacy of the standard definition of "enthymeme" as an incomplete syllogism, it is very difficult to find an adequate replacement. Indeed, one 19th century scholar of rhetoric warned that because of its difficulty, it may even seem "mad" to ask what an enthymeme is.[99] It is not quite impossible, but it is difficult because in order to understand the enthymeme, one must look not only at how Aristotle uses the term throughout the *Rhetoric*, but also at what the word meant before Aristotle adopted and put the concept to his own use. To explain the

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even goes on to subsume paradigms into enthymemes (meaning that examples and induction are used to establish a particular premise that in turn will be part of a broader deductive argument; see 1402b14-19). Following Aristotle's lead, I will also focus on enthymemes and occasionally refer to enthymemes as the broader category of inferential reasoning underlying rhetorical arguments.

[98] Grimaldi (1972, 1980) is the major commentator on the *Rhetoric* who has expressed this broader view of the enthymeme. Arnhart (1981) expands on Grimaldi's points in his own commentary, and forms of this view are accepted by others such as Conley (1984) and Walker (1994, 2000). Most scholars adhere to a conventional view of the enthymeme as solely a device of *logos*. See, for example, Kennedy (1968, 2007), Wisse (1989), Gaines (2000), and McAdon (2004).

[99] Thomas de Quincy: "What then was an Enthymeme? Oxford! Thou wilt think us mad to ask." Discussed in Seaton (1914) and Conley (1984), the original essay was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1818.

enthymeme and the other rhetorical concepts Aristotle introduces, I will thus have to expand the discussion beyond chapter two of the *Rhetoric*.

The standard definition of "enthymeme" is that it is a truncated or incomplete syllogism in which a premise is suppressed. The classical example is "Socrates is a man, so he is mortal"; one need not include the major premise ("All men are mortal") because this is readily understood. The enthymeme is defined as an incomplete syllogism in modern formal logic, but this is not Aristotle's meaning. Aristotle does say that to be effective and avoid being tedious, enthymemes should avoid spelling out all the premises of an argument (e.g. 1395b25-27), but he does not include this as a necessary criterion. That said, while Aristotle himself does not reduce enthymemes to imperfect syllogisms, there is a very long history of misinterpreting Aristotle on this point, and this history makes it difficult to think of the enthymeme in any way other than in terms of formal syllogisms.[100]

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[100] This history goes back to classical times and the development of Stoic philosophy, which co-opted and formalized Aristotelian logic. For example, Aristotelian logic explores valid reasoning, considering how premises deductively lead to conclusions, but in Stoic thought syllogisms were formalized and treated as only having two premises and a conclusion. Enthymemes were then defined as simplified syllogisms having only one stated premise and a conclusion. In Medieval times, Stoic and Peripatetic (Aristotelian) logic were conflated, and when the *Rhetoric* was rediscovered in Europe, the enthymeme was interpreted in light of this conflation. While modern scholars no longer conflate the formalized, Stoic view of logic with Aristotelian logic, the connection with the enthymeme still has influence and it was endorsed by Cope in his widely-cited commentary (1867, pp. 102-104). As a result of this long historical influence, enthymemes have been understood in the analytic terms of formal logic. On the history of the interpretation of enthymemes, see Burnyeat (1994) and Green (1995).

To understand what Aristotle means by enthymeme, it is necessary to consider first his use of the term in the opening chapters of the *Rhetoric*, though ultimately these chapters are inconclusive. In chapter one, Aristotle calls the enthymeme the "body (σῶμα) of the *pisteis*" (1354a15), but it is unclear how to take this metaphor: some think it means the enthymeme can include all of the *pisteis*, providing a common basis for different means of persuasion, while others think that it means *logos* is the basic form and other means of persuasion are clothes or accessories (similar to how Aristotle describes style as an accessory that aids argumentation). In chapter one, Aristotle also says that "persuasion is a sort of demonstration," an enthymeme is a "rhetorical demonstration," and the enthymeme is "a sort of syllogism" (or a syllogism of a sort, συλλογισμός τις; 1355a3-8).[101] Because of the similarity between enthymemes and syllogisms, Aristotle suggests that dialecticians will also be skilled with enthymemes—but he importantly adds that such skill requires that one also understands "what sort of things an enthymeme is concerned with and *what differences it has* from logical syllogisms" (1355a12-14, emphasis added). It is clear from the statements in chapter one that enthymemes are similar to syllogisms in that they involve some form of deductive inference, but it is not yet clear how enthymemes are *different* from syllogisms.

In chapter two, Aristotle gives a sense of what distinguishes enthymemes from logical syllogisms. After reintroducing the concept, Aristotle begins a technical

[101] On συλλογισμός τις implying a very relaxed form of syllogism, see Burnyeat (1994, 1996).

discussion of the features of enthymemes, addressing first the particular character of an enthymeme's premises. Because rhetoric is concerned with *endoxa* (reputable opinions) regarding practical affairs, and it draws its premises from these opinions, rhetoric is usually concerned with *contingent* matters rather than strict *necessities*. This is a reason why rhetoric is not simply a matter of presenting the truth: in many cases, the truth of a matter cannot be known with complete certainty. That said, even lacking complete certainty, one can still give reasons for favoring some positions over others because one can appeal to probabilities and likelihoods. The premises of rhetorical logic will usually be based on probabilities, and so the conclusions one reaches will often only be probable rather than indubitable (see 1357a22-34). For example, a common political argument is that "we need to lower taxes to improve the economy." The underlying logic is: the economy will improve if there is more spending and investment; there will be more spending and investing if people have more money; people will have more money if there are lower taxes; therefore we should lower taxes to improve the economy. These premises and conclusion have a probabilistic logic to them and so they may be persuasive, but they also might be disputed at the different steps. One feature that distinguishes enthymemes from demonstrative syllogisms, then, is the probabilistic logic used in enthymemes.

Along with the character of an enthymeme's premises, Aristotle introduces in chapter two another concept, what he calls the *topoi*. This term is usually translated as "topics," but it should be noted that the word *topoi* literally means "places." Metaphorically, the term refers to places one can look for arguments, so one might also

call the *topoi* "rhetorical resources." The topics provide resources for creating enthymemes. In chapter two, Aristotle only introduces the two general categories of the topics: first, there are the "common topics" (κοινοὶ τόποι), which are general forms of argument that one might employ in any field of argument. The common topics offer different forms or patterns of reasoning that an enthymeme might follow and so they might also be called "formal topics." Aristotle discusses these topics late in Book II, one example being the topic "from the more and the less." This topic is a line of reasoning that if something applies to the greater case, it will certainly apply to the lesser. A rhetorical example of this topic is Martin Luther King Jr.'s claim: "If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail."[102] The other category of topics is the "particular topics" (ἴδια τόποι). These topics offer content or specific premises that one might employ in argument. Most of Book I consists of a survey of "particular topics," such as in 1.9 where Aristotle surveys the topics of praise, considering the different ideas of what is noble and virtuous that one might draw on in praising someone. Similarly, in the first half of Book II, Aristotle surveys particular topics that might be employed in emotional appeals. In offering the building blocks for enthymemes, the particular topics can be thought of as 'material topics.'[103]

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[102] Letter from Birmingham Jail, paragraph 34.

[103] On the distinction between formal and material topics, see Arnhart (1981) p. 51.

Taking together what Aristotle says about *endoxa*, probabilistic premises, and topics for enthymemes, one can offer a more refined, albeit still flawed, definition of the enthymeme—it is a probabilistic syllogism drawn from common or reputable opinions. Along these lines, Bitzer (1959) offered a commonly accepted definition: "The enthymeme is a syllogism based on probabilities, signs, and examples whose function is rhetorical persuasion. Its successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of speaker and audience, and this is its essential character" (p. 59). One problem with this definition is that it does not account for the common or formal topics (i.e. the argumentative forms that enthymemes might follow). In 2.23, Aristotle offers a survey of thirty common topics that one might employ in a speech, but it is striking that very few of these topics take the traditional form of a syllogism. The topic of "the more and the less" mentioned above, for instance, has an underlying logic to it, but it does not follow the standard syllogistic form. Similarly, the other common topics have an inferential basis, moving from generalities to particulars, but given the variety of their forms, one should not reduce the enthymeme to a formal, probabilistic syllogism. This is to say that the enthymeme might be a "syllogism of a sort" in that it features (probabilistic) deductive reasoning, but it is not necessarily confined to a subset of the formal category of syllogism.

Another problem with viewing enthymemes simply as probabilistic syllogisms is that such a conclusion considers only what Aristotle says in a single chapter regarding the character of the enthymeme's premises. The discussion in chapter two helps refine the sense of what enthymemes are, but it is not conclusive because it does not prove that

enthymemes are solely part of the *logos pistis*. As Aristotle said in chapter one, it is necessary to see "what sort of things an enthymeme is concerned with and *what differences it has* from logical syllogisms." However, by delaying the substantive discussion of the different topics used for enthymemes, Aristotle delays the discussion of the actual content of enthymemes. It is thus not clear that chapter two actually *distinguishes* enthymemes from logical syllogisms or whether it only further describes the *similarity* between the two. That is, Aristotle presents in chapter two the *logical* basis of enthymemes and he describes how even non-necessary premises can be understood in terms of syllogistic logic. It is possible, however, that enthymemes mean something more than syllogisms based on probabilistic logic. On this point, it is worth noting that in the *Topics*, Aristotle says that dialectic is also based on reputable opinions, and there he calls a syllogism concerning *endoxa* an "*epicheireme*" ("an attempt," 162a16), so the question rises as to why in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle chooses a different word, enthymeme. To answer this, it is necessary to consider uses of the word that predate Aristotle.

Etymologically, the word enthymeme is based on *thumos*, which was seen by the Greeks as the seat of the passions. *Thumos* can be translated as "heart," so enthymeme literally means something like "in the heart," and the verb form, ἐνθυμέομαι, means "to take to heart."[104] There is thus an affective element to the word, and to bring this out, one might translate enthymeme as an appeal to a passionate impulse. However, there is also a

[104] These definitions are from the Lidell & Scott *Greek-English Lexicon*, though it uses the British expression "to lay to heart" when defining ἐνθυμέομαι.

cognitive sense to the word, as it does not refer to a blind impulse, but rather to something with an intentional direction. Accordingly, *enthymeme* might be thought of as "a passionate consideration."[105] Pre-Aristotelian, non-rhetorical use reflects the cognitive-affective sense of the word. For example, in the *Anabasis,* Xenophon recounts his "considerations" (enthymemes) when he was offered command of the stranded Greek army. Xenophon first notes that he wished for the command because it would lead to honor for himself and benefit for the army, and he then says: "Now such considerations (ἐνθυμήματα) stirred him to desire […] but when, on the other hand, he considered (ἐνθυμοῖτο) that it was unclear to every human being how the future would turn out, he was at a loss."[106] Rhetoricians prior to and contemporary with Aristotle (such as Isocrates, Anaximenes, and Alcidamas) also refer to enthymemes, and they speak of them in more general terms than Aristotle, treating enthymemes either as something like "striking thoughts" that one might employ in argument or as the final capstone used to adorn or complete an extended argument.[107] In all of these cases, enthymemes do not imply syllogisms, nor do they refer to strictly logical concepts.

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[105] See Miller and Bee's (1972) etymological study of the enthymeme.

[106] *Anabasis*, 6.1.21. Burnyeat (1994) uses this example and he also refers to the term enthymeme being used similarly by Sophocles in *Oedipus at Colonus* ("The considerations you urge, old man, must move dread"; 292-3).

[107] On the pre-Aristotelian use of enthymeme in rhetoric, see Conley (1984), Burnyeat (1994), and Walker (1994).

In light of this history and etymology, we can see that Aristotle's major innovation regarding the enthymeme is the application of his understanding of logic and inference to the earlier, more affective understanding of enthymemes. I call this an innovation because in modifying the meaning of enthymeme, Aristotle offers a better, more complete account of how persuasion works. While Aristotle criticizes earlier rhetoricians for overemphasizing the emotional aspect of rhetoric, he does not completely dismiss the persuasive power of the emotions. Rather, he adds to this earlier view of persuasion, bringing out the underlying rationality of persuasive speech, showing how persuasion relies not only on the emotions but also on the basic human capacity to draw logical inferences. When Aristotle first calls the enthymeme "a syllogism of a sort" in chapter one (1355a8), he is introducing the idea that enthymemes have a deductive-inferential character and he is suggesting that enthymemes work by spurring inferential thought. These inferences may be solely rational—i.e. relating only to the argument—but they might also spur an emotional response. This point on the emotions will be expanded on in the next chapter, but for the moment I will only note that in Book II, Aristotle discusses the different "premises" of the emotions, indicating how these premises might be used in enthymemes. For example, Aristotle explains that anger is usually based on some idea of an outrage, and he implies that a speaker can offer a "consideration" (enthymeme) that evokes anger by presenting indications or signs that something is outrageous. By adding his understanding of syllogistic thought to the earlier, affective sense of the word enthymeme, Aristotle presents a concept in the *Rhetoric* that explains

how persuasion speaks to the whole soul, moving a person by speaking to thought and desire together.[108]

With a few notable exceptions (such as Grimaldi, Arnhart, and Walker), most readings of the *Rhetoric* do not grant the broader, cognitive-affective notion of the enthymeme; instead, they confine enthymemes to the terms of formal logic. The syllogistic form is useful for understanding the implicit thought structure of an enthymeme, but in actual delivery, enthymemes rarely follow the strict formula of two premises and a conclusion. As mentioned, this can be seen in Aristotle's discussion of the "common topics" as the different forms of argument one might employ in an enthymeme: very few of the common topics have a form that matches the formal syllogism (see 2.23). Similarly, in Book III, Aristotle warns against the use of "superficial" (ἐπιπόλαιος) enthymemes, which are overly spelled out syllogisms. As Aristotle puts it, enthymemes should "create quick learning in our minds," but they should not be "altogether clear" lest they create "no need to ponder" (1410b21-28). Superficial enthymemes are tedious and they lose their power because they do not leave the inference to the audience.[109]

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[108] On suggestions that Aristotle transformed the notion of enthymeme, see the citations in the previous note, especially Walker (1994), p. 54, as well as Grimaldi (1972) pp. 1-18, 68-82.

[109] I should note in this context that there is one passage in Book III that seems to explicitly rule out my claim that enthymemes can have a broader, cognitive-affective character (see Wisse, 1989, p.24-25). In 3.17, Aristotle warns not to use enthymemes to arouse passions: "for it will either drive out the passion or it will be spoken in vain" (1418a12-14). The broader context of the passage, however, reveals that Aristotle is warning against superficial, overly spelled out enthymemes. For example, he immediately goes on to say that "maxims" (γνώμη) can be used (1418a17-21); in 2.21, Aristotle claims that a maxim is a "part of an enthymeme," explaining:

In limiting Aristotle's notion of the enthymeme to the terms of the logical syllogism, conventional readings reduce the enthymeme to the superficial enthymeme. Other than the historical misinterpretation of enthymemes as strictly logical argumentation, a reason for the resistance to the claim that enthymemes can embody *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* is simply that it is a difficult notion to understand—how can emotional and character appeals contain inferential reasoning? This is difficult to answer as Aristotle does not provide many examples of enthymemes in speech.[110] I will soon return to consider Aristotle's discussion of enthymemes more fully, but in order to convey the broader meaning of the term, I will first explain how enthymemes can be seen at work in actual speeches. Given the number of technical terms that have been introduced—*endoxa*, *pisteis*, *topoi*, and *enthymemes*—some applied examples are in order.

IV. Examples of Enthymemes in Speech

Rhetoric relies on *endoxa*, the respected opinions that provide the premises for rhetorical appeals. In America, the most honored *endoxa* are the "self-evident truths" put forward in the *Declaration of Independence*: all men are created equal, they are endowed

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"maxims are more or less the conclusions of enthymemes or the premises with the syllogistic form removed" (1394a25-28). For more on these passages, see Arhart (1981), pp. 180-181.

[110] For that matter, many interpreters of the *Rhetoric* also avoid offering specific examples of enthymemes. Grimaldi (1972, 1980) and Arnhart (1981), for instance, offer cogent textual analyses of the *Rhetoric* in order to demonstrate that Aristotle thinks that enthymemes can include emotional and character appeals, but these scholars rarely if ever offer examples of enthymemes that embody logical, emotional, and character appeals.

with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and governments are instituted to protect these rights. Many of the most influential speeches in American history are based on appeals to these foundational beliefs, the most famous such speech being Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*. Much of the rhetorical power of the *Gettysburg Address* comes from its rhythm and simple style. More substantively, what makes the speech so impressive is Lincoln's ability to focus the audience on a particular aspect of the *Declaration*, namely, the "proposition that all men are created equal." Lincoln appeals to this proposition not only to elevate the sacrifice of the fallen soldiers at Gettysburg, but he broadens the scope of the civil war itself, presenting it not as a mere "war between the states," but a struggle to defend the fundamental idea of the American Founding. Even more broadly, in focusing on equality as *the* central proposition, Lincoln offers a purified vision to correct the flaws of the historical founding. I will return to this reinterpretative aspect of the *Gettysburg Address* in the concluding chapter when I discuss how rhetoric can be used to refine common opinion. For the moment, however, I only mean to draw on a well-known speech to help demonstrate how less well-known rhetorical concepts function in effective speech.[111]

Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* is a very short speech, evoking many thoughts and emotions with very few words. For this reason, it is an excellent example of how enthymemes can embody several forms of appeal at once. As a funeral speech, it is meant

[111] For a detailed analysis of the *Gettysburg Address* in terms of classical rhetoric, as well as a discussion of the broader political purpose of the speech, see Wills (1996).

to honor the dead. However, Lincoln also uses the occasion to rally the nation, recommitting the people to the cause of the war. Lincoln accomplishes the broader task by linking it with the immediate task: to honor the dead, we as a nation must carry on their unfinished work. This argument is the basis of the stirring conclusion:

> It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

If one were to look only at what is explicitly said, one might reduce the speech to two quasi-syllogistic arguments: 'We are here to dedicate this battlefield, but those who fought here already did so, so we cannot,' and 'the task of the living is to carry out the unfinished work of the dead, and their work was to ensure that this nation will not perish.' These statements lead to the implicit conclusion: 'as the living, we must ensure this nation will not perish.' Moving past this basic structure, Aristotle's discussion of particular topics (*topoi*) and the implicit premises of enthymemes helps identify the more important underlying enthymemic structure of Lincoln's speech.

As a funeral speech, the *Address* employs "topics of praise" (1.9), meaning that it draws on common views of what is praiseworthy: specifically, the nobility and virtue of the fallen. Among the topics Aristotle considers, he mentions that one might praise the dead for their sacrifice for their country and for "things that are good simply" (1367b36-a3). These topics are *endoxa* in that everyone believes that such actions are praiseworthy, so one need not state the general premise ('sacrifice is noble and praiseworthy'). Rather, it is enough to speak of the particular instances, as Lincoln does: these men "gave their lives that that nation might live." Aristotle also advises that to emphasize the virtue of those praised, a speaker should stress that their actions were freely chosen (1367b22-26). Lincoln does so, highlighting the heroism of the soldiers who "gave the last full measure of devotion" to the nation. Furthermore, Lincoln speaks not only of sacrifice for country; he heightens the honor by connecting the sacrifice to what Aristotle calls "things that are good simply." Lincoln does this by appealing to fundamental American beliefs about natural rights and just government. Indeed, Lincoln frames the whole Address with appeals to these beliefs: he opens by reminding the audience that the nation was "conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are equal," he describes the Civil War in terms of a struggle to decide whether "that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure," and he closes by describing the work of the fallen and the living as fighting to ensure that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Much of the funeral speech thus consists of a *logos* of praise, but at the same time, Lincoln is also engaged in an emotional appeal (*pathos*), evoking feelings of commitment

and gratitude for the dead. In Aristotle's topics on friendship (i.e. arguments used to evoke feelings of friendship [2.4]), he explains that people feel attachment with "those to whom the same things are good" (1381a8) and love for "those who have given [us] great benefit" (1381a11-12). Similarly, in the topics on gratitude (2.7), Aristotle echoes this latter point, highlighting "service done for someone in need with nothing in return" (1385a17-19). Again, these arguments rely on *endoxa*, common opinions on what constitutes friendship and gratitude; they are generally understood and need not be explicitly mentioned. As will be discussed in the next chapter, emotional appeals work by appealing to the thoughts or premises associated with particular emotions. In the *Gettysburg Address*, Lincoln encourages the audience to mourn their fellow citizens, reminding them of shared commitments, and, by mentioning the life of the Nation that the dead fought to preserve for the living, he evokes feelings of love and gratitude. Lincoln uses these emotional appeals to encourage the audience to be committed to the noble cause of the war.

One could describe Lincoln's speech in terms of separate appeals of *logos* (describing praiseworthy actions) and *pathos* (evoking love and gratitude), but it is important to note that these appeals are carried out at the same time, and more than that: they are woven together in such a way that they are inseparable. That is, the appeals have the same enthymemic structure, appealing to the same premises (of sacrifice and what is good) and pointing to the same signs (the particular actions) for both praise and pathos. The funeral speech thus has as its core a combined *logos*/*pathos* enthymeme. Lincoln draws on the power of this enthymeme of honor, love, and gratitude in order to encourage

the living to continue the work of the fallen and to ensure that they "have not died in vain."

Another famous American 'speech' appealing to the foundational beliefs of the *Declaration of Independence* is Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963). This is a letter rather than a spoken speech, but it is important to note that rhetoric is not limited to oral speech. As Aristotle discusses in 3.12, oral speech allows for more influence by means of stylistic delivery and performance, but written speech allows for greater precision in argument. The "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is a helpful example for present purposes because King generally uses conventional enthymemes that consist separately of *logos*, *ethos*, or *pathos* appeals, but the letter also culminates in an enthymeme that combines all three forms of appeal.

The immediate context of the letter is that it is a response to statement made by several Alabama clergymen condemning King's protest methods: in their "Call to Unity," the clergymen granted that segregation constituted social injustice but argued that change should be pursued through courts rather than civil protests. While King's letter is ostensibly addressed to these clergymen, it was written (and subsequently published) for a national audience. In particular, King sought to evoke sympathy and support from Northern whites for the civil rights movement. The letter itself can be classified as a defense speech, meaning that King is attempting to defend his actions and those of his fellow protestors. As Aristotle explains in the chapters on defense speech (1.10-14), these speeches involve an appeal to justice. While *endoxa* usually refer to common opinions,

those held by everyone or the majority, the term more generally applies to any opinions that are held in esteem. King frequently draws on the reputable opinions of the wise, citing different philosophers and theologians to support his argument. Appealing to the views of Augustine and Aquinas, King says that "one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws" (¶12). While this Christian argument goes substantively beyond Aristotle's particular topics on just laws (1.13), King employs a classical form of rhetorical syllogism in his argument: one should not obey unjust laws; discriminatory laws are unjust; therefore they should not be obeyed. One is thus led to conclude that the disobedience is defensible because it is not unjust.

Along with this *logos* argument, King also employs character appeals (*ethos*) in the form of reasoning, "just as X, so too Y." This argument form is an example of what Aristotle calls the common topic "from analogy" (see 1397b23-29). To establish his decent character, King likens his actions to those of Paul and Socrates:

> Just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own town. (¶3)

> Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in

> society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. (¶9)

These enthymemes of *logos* and *ethos* are effective for establishing King's general defense, but the most powerful enthymeme comes at the end of the speech: it is an enthymeme that embodies rational, character, and emotional appeal all at once. In his discussion of the emotions, Aristotle describes sympathy as the feeling of pain at the undeserved suffering of others, and he adds that this suffering is something "that a person might expect himself or one of his own to suffer" (1385b15). This is to say that, at some level, one must identify with the sufferers to feel sympathy with them. This identification is particularly important for King's purpose of garnering Northern support: he must make the struggle against Southern segregation relatable to Northern whites. To achieve this end, King appeals to the foundational American beliefs of the *Declaration of Independence*. After claiming that "One day the South will recognize its real heroes" and describing the suffering of the protestors—facing "jeering and hostiles mobs," "agonizing loneliness," they are "oppressed, battered"—King concludes:

> One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their

formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

(¶36)

In casting the protest movement as a struggle to protect fundamental American beliefs, King is providing the means for linking the Civil Rights protestors with American ideals and American heroes, thereby allowing for broader sympathy.[112] At the same time, King also speaks to the justness of the movement and to the heroic character of its members (including himself). Part of what makes this final argument so powerful is that it brings all forms of appeal (*logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*) together in a single enthymeme. Furthermore, the argument leaves several premises unstated, allowing the reader to fill in what is implicit. Through this participation, the audience is more apt to think and feel along with King, and so they are more likely to be persuaded of his argument. Earlier in the argument, King used conventional enthymemes, spelling out the premises and conclusions in a logical, easy to follow form. By contrast, in the final argument, one has to complete the implicit thought structure. To understand the persuasive power of the argument, one could map out the argument syllogistically: the implied major premise comes from the common opinion that those who stand up for American beliefs and values

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[112] In his famous "I Have a Dream" speech (1963), King also casts the Civil Rights movement in light of the *Declaration of Independence*, using an extended metaphor to describe the Declaration as a "promissory note." King echoes earlier Civil Rights leaders in appealing to the ideals of the American founding. Probably the most thorough and powerful example of a civil rights speech appealing to founding ideals is Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" (1852), in which Douglass shames Americans for failing to understand and live by the principles of the *Declaration and Constitution*.

are heroes; the minor premise is that the protestors are standing up for those beliefs and values; and so the conclusion is that the protestors are heroes. One could similarly map out how the syllogistic character of the *pathos* appeal leading to sympathy ("I feel sympathy for those like me who suffer undeservedly…") and how the *ethos* appeal leads to trust and respect ("I trust those who are virtuous…"). It is unnecessary to do so in writing, however, and, as Aristotle notes, it is often better not to spell everything out in one's enthymemes, but rather to rely on what is implicit to allow for the audience to come to an understanding on their own (1410b23).[113]

These examples should suffice to clarify the meaning of Aristotle's rhetorical concepts and how they apply to actual speeches. In particular, the examples demonstrate what enthymemes are, how they can embody and unite multiple forms of rhetorical appeal, and how they help explain the persuasive power of speech. In the next chapter I will turn to focus on this last issue of the persuasive power of speech. First, however, I will complete the overview of the *Rhetoric*, explaining the structure of the work.

V. The Structure of the *Rhetoric*

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* consists of three books. As discussed, the first two chapters of Book I offer a dual introduction to the whole work. Chapter three introduces three general categories of rhetorical speech: deliberative (to exhort or dissuade), judicial (to

[113] For further analysis of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail," see Walker (1994), who also discusses the letter in relation to pre-Aristotelian notions of the enthymeme.

attack or defend), and ceremonial (*epideictic*: to praise or blame) rhetoric. The rest of Book I is an elaboration of these three categories, explaining the general end towards which a speaker appeals in each case (the advantageous, the just, and the noble), and the opinions commonly held regarding these three ends. In surveying these common opinions, Aristotle is offering the materials for constructing arguments on these subjects, and so the rest of Book I consists of a survey of "particular topics" relevant to rational argument (the *logos pistis*). In the first part of Book II, Aristotle explores the other two artful *pisteis* (emotional and character appeal), discussing first the emotions (2.2-11) and then different character types (2.12-17). As with Book I, these chapters offer the materials (opinions, premises, topics) for understanding emotional and character appeals. In the latter part of Book II (2.18-2.26), Aristotle discusses enthymemes more generally, focusing on "common topics" (forms of argument) as well as identifying false enthymemes. Finally, in Book III Aristotle focuses on how speech is delivered, first considering wording (λέξις, 3.1-12) and then arrangement (τάξις, 3.13-19).

When one sees the full nature of the enthymeme—namely, that enthymemes can also include emotional and character appeals—a clear structure emerges wherein the *Rhetoric* consists of an exploration of the enthymeme and its role in persuasion: Aristotle first explores the materials (particular topics) that can be used for enthymemes of *logos* (1.3-1.15), *pathos* (2.1-2.11), and *ethos* (2.12-2.17), and he then considers the forms

(common topics) of the enthymeme more generally (2.18-2.26).[114] Aristotle even suggests such a structure in several key transitional passages throughout the work—though again, biographical scholars dismiss these passages as editorial additions meant to give the semblance of a structure.[115] The biographical reading is based on the narrow view of the enthymeme as a solely logical argument. However, when the full character of the enthymeme is appreciated, the coherent structure of the work can identified, which in turn undermines the biographical reading's view of the *Rhetoric*.

Finally, if one accepts the statements made in transitional stages, Book III also has a clear place in the work. At the end of Book II, Aristotle says that Books I and II address the "thought" (διάνοια) of rhetoric, and it seems that he has in mind the underlying thought structure of persuasion, which I have argued should be understood in terms of the enthymeme. Book III is more practical, looking more specifically at how the "thought" of rhetoric is expressed and delivered. This is a natural expansion on the earlier

[114] For more on the enthymeme as the basis of the *Rhetoric*'s structure, see Grimaldi (1972) pp. 28-52, and Arnhart (1982), pp. 51-53.

[115] For example, Aristotle at several points offers brief reviews, saying that he has described the topics from which one can derive premises or opinions for creating enthymemes for deliberative, judicial, or ceremonial speeches, and he then says he will do the same for emotional and character appeal (1377b18, 1378a27, 1391b25). Similarly, in a review in 2.22, Aristotle says that he has described the topics or "elements of enthymemes" on which one can draw for making speeches (1396b20-21), and he also says that he has "taken up in the same way" the topics concerning the passions and character types (1396b28-31). Rejections of these passages can be found in Kennedy (2007), who relies on Kassel's (1971) reading.

discussion, and it further adds to the understanding of how rhetoric and persuasion work. One can thus see a coherent structure for the whole of the *Rhetoric*.

With this overview of the *Rhetoric* and its concepts in mind, let me return to the issues with which I opened this chapter. I noted at the beginning that rhetoric is often understood in a pejorative sense. Rhetoric is seen as dishonest and manipulative, and it is often asked why speakers resort to rhetoric rather than plainly stating the truth of a matter. While Aristotle criticizes previous rhetoricians for putting too much emphasis on emotional appeals and stylistic arrangement, he nevertheless defends rhetoric as a necessary art. The reason for this defense is that rational demonstration by itself is not sufficient to persuade audiences. Throughout the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explores how persuasion works, and at the foundation of this study is the idea of the enthymeme as a cognitive-affective rhetorical device that brings about persuasion by speaking to the whole soul rather than merely a logical "part" of the soul. The enthymeme is thus the central concept of the *Rhetoric* and the whole work is structured as an exploration of enthymemic persuasion.

Having considered the structure of the work and the concepts Aristotle uses to explain rhetoric, particularly the enthymeme as the thought structure underlying rhetorical appeals, I am now in a better position to offer a second, more focused study of the *Rhetoric*. Specifically, I can turn now to discuss the psychology of persuasion and its broader relation to Aristotelian political psychology.

CHAPTER 3: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSUASION

In the previous two chapters I offered overviews of the major ideas and concepts in Aristotle's study of psychology and rhetoric. Having discussed psychology and rhetoric separately, I will turn now to combine these subjects in order to address the psychology of persuasion. The key question for understanding the psychology of persuasion is: Why is rhetoric persuasive? How is it that people are persuaded through rhetorical speech? Recall that Aristotle's major criticism of earlier rhetoricians is that they focused solely on the non-rational aspects of rhetoric, such as the manipulation of passions. This criticism is not simply an ethical one: while Aristotle begins the *Rhetoric* with a very high-minded critique, he soon grants the necessity of non-rational appeals. Rather, the larger problem is that previous rhetoricians overlooked the rational core of rhetoric, and in doing so, they failed to *understand* persuasion. As Aristotle's *Rhetoric* demonstrates, a proper understanding of persuasion requires an appreciation of the underlying rationality of rhetoric—which means that understanding Aristotle's teaching on the psychology of persuasion will in turn provide a more complete view of human rationality.

In what follows, I offer an interpretation that focuses on the psychology of the *Rhetoric*. I begin by considering Aristotle's account of the rational means of persuasion (*logos*) in Book I of the *Rhetoric*. It is here that we can see most clearly the rational core of persuasion, gaining a better understanding of how enthymemes work and how they ultimately appeal to implicit notions of the good. In section two, I turn to the other means of persuasion, focusing on Aristotle's explanation of emotional appeal in Book II. The

central question in this second section concerns how rational speech can influence the seemingly irrational. Answering this question requires understanding how the emotions are not simply irrational; rather, they have a rational basis and an enthymemic character that can be appealed to by speech. Finally, in the third section I address rhetorical arrangement and delivery as explored in Book III. A major task for understanding rhetoric is seeing how an orator can encourage the audience to focus on one end over other alternatives. By drawing on the psychology of action, I identify an important analogy between Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia* (loss of self-control) and his account of style. This is not to say that rhetoric overwhelms the mind, but just as Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia* highlights how some ends become more vivid in a person's mind, so too does his account of style show how some ends are made more active or present in the minds of the audience. To sum up: whereas the previous chapter was an overview of the technical concepts in the *Rhetoric*, what follows here is a psychological analysis of *logos* (Book I), *pathos* (Book II), and style (Book III).

I. Rational Appeal and Hierarchical Conceptions of the Good

Returning, then, to the governing question of this chapter: Why is rhetoric persuasive? Many critical or subversive views of rhetoric focus on emotional manipulation and stylistic trickery. While these rhetorical devices are not irrelevant, they hardly account for the entirety of persuasion, as they ignore the rational propositions that are meant to sway an audience. Book I of the *Rhetoric* focuses on these latter types of arguments. By isolating the rational means of persuasion and analyzing them first,

Aristotle offers the reader an opportunity to understand the underlying rationality of rhetoric. When one subsequently turns to the other means of persuasion, one can identify the rational content of emotional appeals and stylistic delivery, thereby allowing one to appreciate better the rationality of rhetoric as a whole.

Book I is thus concerned with the structure of rational rhetorical arguments. That said, it is a very difficult book to understand. Though there is a clear overarching structure, it is easy to lose sight of this order because each of these chapters also contains long, and sometimes tedious, listings of particular opinions. To see what Aristotle is doing in Book I, it is critical to understand the motives governing the different levels of his presentation. On the one hand, the general structure of the chapters is quite clear: after an initial introduction to rhetoric (1.1-2), Aristotle in 1.3 describes the three forms or occasions for rhetoric, and in the subsequent chapters he examines these individual forms: *deliberative* rhetoric (for advice or dissuasion, 1.4-1.8), *ceremonial* rhetoric (for praise or blame, 1.9), and *judicial* rhetoric (for prosecution or defense, 1.10-15). The internal structure of these three sections is also fairly clear as they follow a similar format: first, Aristotle discusses the overall end that is appealed to in the particular form of rhetoric (the advantageous, the noble/beautiful, and the just, respectively) and then he considers a wide array of opinions as to what constitutes these ends.[116]

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[116] Aristotle identifies the just as the end of judicial rhetoric, but the chapters on this form of rhetoric focus much more on the unjust and why people commit injustice because court cases either involve an accusation of injustice or a defense against such accusations.

When one shifts from this broad structural perspective, however, and focuses instead on the particular chapters, the multitude of specific opinions discussed in the course of Book I can be overwhelming. For example, in 1.7—which Kennedy (2007) introduces as "one of the most tortuous" chapters in the book (p. 65)—Aristotle offers a detailed account of the "greater good," presenting fifty-five different ways in which something might be considered better than something else. The long series of lists makes it easy to lose sight of Aristotle's overarching purpose, but it is important to keep in mind how these lists also contribute to the overall end of Book I. As other interpreters have noted, the long lists survey the opinions most relevant to political rhetoric. Sachs (2009) describes the purpose of Book I well in his introduction:

> Aristotle generalizes his discussion to take in all the occasions that call for rhetoric, and begins by exploring the opinions that form the basis of civic life. Book I of the *Rhetoric* is a survey of our shared perceptions of the advantageous, the just, and the beautiful, the goals for the sake of which we live in communities. (pp. 19-20)

The key for appreciating the broad survey of opinions in Book I, then, is understanding that the survey offers insight into what different people may think about general political matters. These common opinions therefore cover the assumptions or premises that can be appealed to in rhetorical arguments.

The fact that the opinions covered in Book I are *common* opinions (*endoxa*), must be emphasized, because portions of the text often conflict with each other and also with

Aristotle's other works. These conflicts might present another interpretive challenge, but upon consideration, since *endoxa* are the opinions respected by general audiences, it should not be surprising that there are conflicts and contradictions within these opinions. In works like the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, Aristotle proceeds more dialectically, taking up and refining common views. In the *Ethics*, for example, he considers several definitions of happiness before correcting them to find a better definition (NE 1095b14-19, 1098a16-20, 1178a2-9). But in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle warns in advance that he is not working through the particular opinions "with precision" or seeking "to define things in accordance with the truth" (1359b2-5); rather, he is attempting to survey the range of opinions that audiences tend to hold.[117] Regarding happiness, for example, he simply lists four different definitions of happiness (virtuous activity, self-sufficiency, pleasure, and wealth) because these definitions encompass a wide variety of views on happiness (1360b14-18).[118] Depending on his particular audience, an orator must be able to appeal to different ends, and the broad survey of

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[117] This is not to say that the dialectical effort in the *Ethics* or *Politics* leads to ultimate truths or certainty. Near the start of the *Ethics*, for example, Aristotle warns that human affairs are not open to the precision of mathematics (1094b19-27). Nevertheless, Aristotle is more critical of common opinions in these other works and he refines the opinions to a greater degree of precision than he does in the *Rhetoric*. On the contrast between the precision of the *Rhetoric* and the *Ethics*, see Sachs's (2009) helpful introduction to the *Rhetoric* (p.19).

[118] Commentators such as Cope (1867) and McAdon (2006) point to this unrefined list of opinions regarding happiness as a sign that the *Rhetoric* is either an earlier work than the *Ethics* or that the two works were at least partially written by different authors. This claim ignores the different purposes of the texts, as Aristotle explains in each, and it further ignores that one of the opinions listed regarding happiness (virtuous activity) generally corresponds with the definition Aristotle reaches in the *Ethics* ("an activity of the soul … in accordance with the best and most complete virtue" 1098a16-18).

opinions in Book I of the *Rhetoric* offers the resources for constructing or understanding different rhetorical arguments.

While Aristotle does not offer in the *Rhetoric* a critical review of common opinions, this is not to say that the opinions are presented haphazardly. Rather, the chapters have a very clear manner of presentation whereby Aristotle points to the logical relationship between different opinions. Indeed, Aristotle often uses deductive language in his presentation, first positing a general category by saying, "Let X be …", and then deriving more particular concepts from this definition, saying, "If X is this, then it is necessary that these points follow…". Aristotle's survey of opinions concerning happiness in 1.5 is illustrative of this general approach. After introducing "the advantageous" as the end appealed to in deliberative rhetoric, he identifies the happiness of the citizens as the common goal of different deliberative appeals. Having established the broadest end, Aristotle goes on to consider opinions about happiness in a syllogistic manner, first defining happiness in four ways ("Let happiness be…"), then deriving different constituent parts of happiness ("If happiness is this, it is necessary that the parts be this…"), and finally examining the constitutive elements of each of these parts ("Let us now in a similar way grasp what each of these is…"). The other chapters follow a similar format, with Aristotle first offering a general definition of the subject (such as the good in 1.6, the noble in 1.9) and then cataloguing a wide range of opinions related to the more general view.

Though it can make for somewhat tedious reading, there is a reason behind Aristotle's procedure. By organizing the chapters in this deductive manner, Aristotle highlights the *implicit* logic underlying common opinions, showing how, in case after case, particular opinions rely upon more general concepts. As Arnhart (1981) notes in his commentary:

> This is not to say that men are generally aware of the logical character of their common opinions as presented here in the *Rhetoric*. But one might say that common opinions possess an implicit logic that becomes evident only when Aristotle presents them in a refined and orderly manner. (p.65)

This implicit logic is what serves as the *basis* for rhetorical or enthymemic reasoning. Rhetorical appeals rarely spell out all of the premises of an argument. Instead, they rely on what is generally understood or what is implicitly assumed by the audience. The key for understanding a persuasive appeal is grasping this full logic—meaning the explicit *and implicit* premises of an argument, as well as the ultimate end or most general assumption of a proposition. While one need not explicitly appeal to these other ends, it is necessary to understand the implicit assumptions regarding them if one is to understand the full persuasive force of an appeal. Aristotle draws out this point through his extensive and systematic survey of common opinions.

Sachs's and Arnhart's comments regarding the scope and logical character of the surveyed opinions are invaluable aids for understanding the purpose of Book I of the *Rhetoric*. What has not been sufficiently appreciated, however, is the *psychological*

character of this presentation. Indeed, to the extent that any part of the *Rhetoric* is appreciated as relevant to psychology, readers focus on Book II and its analysis of the passions. To understand and appreciate the psychology at work in Book I, however, it is necessary to recall that Aristotle identifies the ultimate end of choice as an idea of the good, a claim that he reiterates at several points in the *Rhetoric*.[119] It is true that Book I presents a broad survey of opinions on the advantageous, noble, and just, and that it further identifies the logical structure of beliefs within these opinions—but to go one step further, it is necessary to see that Aristotle also draws out how all of these particular opinions relate back to ever broader opinions regarding what is good.

It is this connection to a view of the good that provides the persuasive force of rational appeals. That is, rational appeals ultimately have recourse to some broader conception of what is good. Echoing Arnhart's comment on the implicit logic of common opinions, this is not to say that people explicitly think of their actions in abstract terms of "the good." Choices are made for the sake of immediate ends; these immediate ends, however, point back to broader or higher ends, and ultimately back to a more fundamental belief or set of beliefs regarding what is good. Recall that in the psychology of choice, Aristotle uses the practical syllogism to describe the thought structure of

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[119] Some examples of this claim regarding the good in the *Rhetoric*: "So let the good be that which is chosen for its own sake, that for the sake of which we choose something else, and that for which all things possessing perception or intelligence aim" (1362a21-24); "Since the good was what all aim towards…" (1365a1); "no one wishes for something except when he believes it to be good" (1369a3-4).

actions, drawing out the connection of immediate ends to an ultimate goal. The concept of the enthymeme (or rhetorical syllogism) has a similar role in describing the implicit thought structure of a rhetorical appeal. Specifically, the enthymeme presents a quasi-logical argument appealing to premises that ultimately lead back to some notion of what is good.

The *Rhetoric* thus shares an important connection with Aristotle's works that examine human psychology. What distinguishes the *Rhetoric* from these other works is that the *Rhetoric* offers an extended presentation of the logic underlying common opinions, thereby demonstrating how even the most prosaic practical opinions ultimately draw upon an idea of the good. This can be seen most clearly in Aristotle's discussion of deliberative rhetoric. By contrast, the discussions of ceremonial and judicial rhetoric highlight some of the deepest conflicts that often exist in people's implicit assumptions about the good. I will now take each of these up—the hierarchical conception of the good that underlies deliberative rhetoric, and the more deeply conflictual picture of the good that typically informs ceremonial and judicial rhetoric—before turning to consider the psychology at work in Books II and III of the *Rhetoric*.

i. Appealing to a Hierarchy of Goods

Of the three forms of rational persuasion, deliberative rhetoric most clearly involves an appeal to a higher or more general good. The explicit "end" (1358b22) or "target" (1362a18) of deliberative rhetoric is "the advantageous," which Aristotle describes as an instrumental good: something that is good because it leads to other,

higher goods that are chosen for their own sake. Aristotle does not immediately discuss the intrinsic goods, but their role becomes clear in subsequent chapters. In 1.4, he focuses on the most practical concerns for deliberative rhetoric—namely the general subjects of political deliberation (finance, war and peace, defense, trade, and legislation) as well as what one specifically needs to know when speaking about these subjects. For example, if one is to advise the city on finances, one should first know about the city's sources of income and expenses. However, these subjects of deliberation are not the ultimate ends to which one appeals. Regarding financial matters, for instance, one does not argue that finance should be pursued for its own sake. Rather, there is an underlying assumption that finance is beneficial for the sake of other ends. Aristotle suggests the necessity of considering these other ends at the conclusion of 1.4, saying, "Let us speak in turn about the things *on the basis of which* one ought to give exhortations or warnings concerning these and other things" (1360b1-3, emphasis added).

The general end to which Aristotle turns in 1.5 is happiness, "the target of nearly everyone in private and everyone in common" (1360b4-5).[120] In 1.6, he also describes happiness as the foremost human good, saying that "happiness … is chosen for its own sake, it is self-sufficient, and we choose the other things for the sake of it" (1362b10-12).

[120] I will address the ambiguity of "nearly everyone" below in regards to ceremonial rhetoric and appeals to the noble.

As mentioned above, Aristotle offers several definitions to capture different views of happiness:

> Let happiness be good activity (εὐπραξία) combined with virtue; or self-sufficient living; or pleasant life along with safety; or an abundance of possessions and bodies[121] along with the ability to guard and use these; for everyone pretty much agrees that happiness is one or more of these things. (1360b14-18)

Aristotle thus presents a range of views on happiness, but, put generally, the idea of happiness is a notion of what is most worth acting for or what makes life most complete. This notion serves as the ultimate end or highest good that is appealed to by deliberative rhetoric. As Aristotle puts it, "all exhortations and warnings are concerned with this [happiness] and with the things that contribute to and oppose it" (1360b9-11). The challenge for understanding deliberative rhetoric, then, is seeing how particular appeals aim at a notion of happiness.

Generally, a rhetorical appeal to happiness will not be explicit or readily apparent. A financial debate, for example, will probably consist only of competing propositions concerning the best means of increasing revenue. Such a means might be increasing taxes, reducing expenditures, or taking loans. There is plenty of room to debate which of

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[121] "Bodies" is a crude way of referring to slaves.

these different means will be most effective, but there will be no need to discuss higher concerns—at least, that is, as long as the audience already accepts that the financial issue is the end requiring action. In most cases, however, there will be different groups in the audience with different opinions as to which end should be pursued. To persuade these other groups, it is necessary to consider their implicit beliefs, ascending within these to reach a common ground, appealing to a broader end that is held by the various parties. For instance, there might be a clash about whether to focus on finance or defense measures. In this case, one would have to persuade one of the groups in light of a broader end. If those focusing on the financial end have a materialistic conception of happiness ("an abundance of possessions"), one would have to advocate for defense in light of material ends: "we must be able to guard and protect our possessions if we are to enjoy them." Alternatively, if those focusing on defense have a more moral conception of happiness ("good activity combined with virtue"), one would need to appeal to their sense of responsibility: "if we are to carry out our duty of protecting our community, our family, our friends, we must have the financial resources to do so." If a common ground is reached, there will still be room for debating the best means (e.g., how to best protect the community: finance or defense?), but the important point is that the debate would now be under the explicit purview of higher ends that would otherwise have been left implicit.

For appeals to higher ends to be effective, they must actually reflect the audience's broader concerns. Aristotle's survey of opinions about happiness and other goods (1.5-6) helps identify the kinds of concerns one should consider. This survey of

opinions is only general, of course, and a rhetorician needs to know the specific habits and traditions of his audience to understand what they value and respect. In particular, Aristotle emphasizes in 1.8 that one must account for the audience's political regime and understand how it influences their opinions. For example, he notes that the end of oligarchies is wealth, and so, when addressing an oligarchic council, one would emphasize ends related to securing wealth; similarly, in addressing a democratic assembly, one would emphasize ends related to protecting liberty (see 1366a2-16). In the *Rhetoric*, however, Aristotle only describes this regime influence in the most general terms, directing the reader instead to the *Politics* for a more precise account (1366a21). This serves as a reminder that, for all practical purposes, rhetoric as a mere technical skill is limited: along with knowledge of persuasive speech, one also requires substantive knowledge about the particular audience and the subject of deliberation if one wishes to *create* persuasive speech.[122]

A formal understanding of rhetoric is sufficient, however, for understanding the structure of persuasive appeals and for identifying the rationality of rhetoric. Regarding the enthymemic form of rational persuasion, the explicit appeal focuses only on an

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[122] On the formal limits of rhetoric, see 1358a21-26. After distinguishing common topics (applicable to all areas of discourse) and specific topics (applicable only to a particular subject), Aristotle warns: "The former [the common topics] will not make one knowledgeable about any class of things, for these topics are not concerned with any underlying subject. But regarding the latter [the particular topics], the better one is at selecting premises, [the more] he will be creating, without noticing it, a knowledge different than rhetoric and dialectic. For if he happens upon first principles (ἀρχαῖς), his knowledge will no longer be of dialectic or rhetoric; rather, it will be knowledge of that [subject] whose first principles he possesses."

immediate end (though one might need to appeal explicitly to a broader end in cases of dispute)—but the power of the appeal ultimately relies on the audience's implicit assumptions as to what is good and what leads to happiness. An appeal to security, for example, should be understood in terms of the full hierarchy of goods of which security is a part. Following this example, one could draw out the relationship of these ends, from most general to most particular:

> Happiness as virtuous activity: Protecting the community: Security:
> Financial wherewithal: Increased revenue: Raised taxes

While these ends are not related to each other in a strictly logical sense, there is nevertheless a loose, deductive-inferential relationship in the sense that one can appeal to one end as a means to a higher end. An enthymeme reflects this chain of different ends, appealing to the implicit ends that motivate action.

One can thus conceptualize the hierarchical order of different ends, but it must be granted that such a hierarchy is a simplification and abstraction in the sense that the audience will not have such a single-minded view or such a clear ordering of their opinions. There will be a multitude of potential ends at different levels of generality, and the audience will also have complex notions of happiness that may include many particular goods. At times these ends will be consistent and complement each other, contributing to an overall sense of what is good, but there will also be occasions where there are disparate or conflicting ends reflecting the audience's conflicting opinions and desires. Rhetoric involves appealing to implicitly held ends, and so the conflicts between

these ends present a problem, but also an opportunity. That is, whereas dialectic requires agreement and the resolution of contradictions, rhetoric can allow contradictions to remain in place, appealing to certain ends over others. That said, before addressing how a rhetorician can encourage the audience to focus on particular ends, it is important to consider first the conflict that can exist in views of the good. For this, it is helpful to turn to the discussion of ceremonial and judicial rhetoric. Because these forms of rhetoric appeal to ends other than "the advantageous," they highlight the potential for the broadest and most intransigent conflicts between ends.

ii. Appealing to Conflicting Goods

Because the end of deliberative rhetoric is "the advantageous" (namely, that which is good because it leads to another good), it is fairly clear that it is necessary to look for a higher or more general good beyond the immediate appeal. By contrast, ceremonial and judicial rhetoric appeal to "the noble" and "the just," respectively, and there does not seem to be any appeal to a higher good because these ends are treated as *intrinsic* goods, those that are good in themselves. To understand the potential conflict between these different ends, it is necessary to look more closely at the ends themselves and how they relate to the implicit views of the good involved in deliberative rhetoric. I should note that it might be objected that the three forms of rhetoric are entirely different in purpose and so their ends cannot be compared or come into conflict within the scope of rhetorical appeals. However, there is some overlap. For instance, Aristotle includes the virtues in his discussion of goods to which one might appeal in deliberative rhetoric (1.6). Furthermore, in his discussion of ceremonial rhetoric, he notes that opinions concerning

the noble and virtuous are not only used for praising past action, but can be the basis for proposing future action in deliberative rhetoric (1367b37-68a9).

Before considering the relationship between the different ends and different forms of rhetoric, it must be kept in mind that these are all forms of rational appeal (*logos*). All three forms—deliberative, ceremonial, and judicial rhetoric—rely on appeals that have a similar logical thought structure. This can be seen in the *Rhetoric*'s syllogistic manner of presentation discussed earlier. In the chapter on ceremonial rhetoric, for instance, Aristotle surveys opinions relevant to praising people or actions, but he presents these opinions in a logical order. First, he offers a general definition of the noble ("That which is praised on account of being chosen for itself, or that which, being good, is pleasant because it is good") (1366a33-34); he next argues that, based on this view, it is "necessary" (ἀνάγκη) that virtue is noble, "for it is praised as being good" (1366a35-36); Aristotle then describes the individual virtues more specifically; and finally, he lists the particular signs that indicate that someone is acting virtuously (and thus nobly). It should also be kept in mind that the logical relationship here is not one of strict syllogisms or necessary truths. For instance, Aristotle adopts a conventional understanding of virtue, defining it as the power of providing goods and benefitting others.[123] Based on this definition ("if in fact virtue is this…"), he says that the greatest virtues are "necessarily"

[123] The full definition is: "Virtue is, so it seems (ὡς δοκεῖ), the power (δύναμις) of providing and protecting good things, and the power of conferring many great benefits, indeed all [sorts of benefits] in connection with all things" (1366a36-b1). This is similar to a conventional view of virtue that Socrates challenges in Plato's *Meno* (71e ff.).

those that are most useful to others (1366b3-4), and he focuses on acts of selflessness as the most praiseworthy behavior. These opinions could be dialectically challenged—and, just as Aristotle challenges several conceptions of happiness in the *Ethics*, he also challenges there these opinions about virtue. By contrast, Aristotle is less critical in the *Rhetoric*, but this allows him to demonstrate how a rhetorician can reason within the scope of common opinion.

The discussion of judicial rhetoric also surveys the quasi-logical opinions relevant to defense and prosecution speeches. Injustice is first defined as willingly doing harm contrary to the law (1368b6-7); Aristotle next distinguishes willing from unwilling action and addresses the motives of injustice (1.10-11); and he then focuses on circumstantial signs that an action was done willingly (1.12).[124] For the purpose of comparing the ends of the different forms of rhetoric, however, it is better to focus on Aristotle's discussion of ceremonial rhetoric and its end, the noble. In part this is because the discussion of judicial rhetoric is much lengthier and addresses many more technical details specific to court cases. But more importantly, Aristotle suggests that justice tends to be thought of as either relating to the more general idea of the noble or the advantageous. For instance, when Aristotle addresses opinions regarding the individual virtues, he discusses justice in light of the noble (1362b12). By contrast, when addressing opinions regarding the

[124] Subsequent chapters clarify more particular points regarding judicial rhetoric such as distinguishing types of law as conventional or more universal (1.13), discussing degrees of punishment (1.14), and distinguishing forms of external evidence (1.15).

advantageous, Aristotle describes justice in terms of a communal advantage (1362b28). The point of conflict, then, is between the noble and the advantageous, and so it is necessary to look more closely at views of the noble.

However, when one looks closely at the opinions of the noble presented in Book I, one also finds two conflicting views. On the one hand, Aristotle presents opinions that treat nobility and the virtues as entirely selfless ends: the greatest virtues are those that are most useful to others (1366b3-4); the noblest deeds are those wherein one acts for one's country or simply for the sake of what is good, in disregard of one's own self-interest (1366b36-37a1); and, if there is any reward, it should be honor rather than material benefits (1366b35), the greatest honor being glory that lasts even after death (1367a1-3, a25-27). Within this selfless view, the noble is essentially equated with the good: the noble is praised as that which is choiceworthy for itself (echoing the definition of the good at 1362a22) and Aristotle also says that the noble is pleasant because of its goodness (1366a33-34). By contrast, in Aristotle's survey of opinions regarding happiness, the noble and the virtues are treated as beneficial goods that contribute *as a means* to the greater good of one's own happiness (1360b23, 62b12-14). In this case, the virtues are described as good because they produce other goods and make the virtuous person well-off (1362b2-4).[125] Aristotle thus draws out two conflicting ideas regarding the noble, and in doing so, he points to a common conflict that exists in people's

[125] The full sentence is: "It is also necessary that the virtues are good, for those having them are well-off [εὖ διάκεινται] as a result of them, and [the virtues] are also productive of good things."

understanding: they often think of moral action as selfless and pure, but at the same time they want such actions to be beneficial to the moral individual. The fundamental problem here is that the ideas of selflessness and self-benefit contradict each other—most notably in instances of personal sacrifice that leads to death. There is thus an intransigent and perhaps irresolvable tension in common opinions regarding the noble and its relation to the good.

Aristotle only very obliquely points to this common conflict in moral opinion, but his presentation highlights a major difficulty for rhetoric. Not only will there be disagreements between different members of an audience, but the audience members themselves might have contradictory views within their own opinions. In cases where the audience's opinions can be ordered hierarchically, an orator can seek common ground by appealing to more generally held implicit beliefs. However, when the audience members themselves hold contradicting beliefs, there are limitations as to how far rhetoric can work towards a *resolution* of these tensions. As discussed in the previous chapter, Aristotle compares rhetoric to dialectic. The latter art also begins with respected opinions (*endoxa*), but it challenges these opinions in an effort to root out false opinion and find sound, non-contradicting premises. Rhetoric, by contrast, works within the confines of respected opinions, appealing to premises the audience accepts. There is room in rhetoric for challenging the immediate beliefs of the audience, reminding them of their deeper commitments and beliefs, but correcting deep-seated contradictions within these beliefs is outside the realm of rhetoric and rhetorical reasoning. Such an effort requires dialectic, a

much more challenging form of reasoning that is unlikely to be followed by any general audience.[126]

I will return to discuss these and other limits of rhetoric in the final chapter, but for the moment I will focus on the alternatives that remain for rhetorical persuasion. While rhetoric might not be able to resolve contradictory views, rhetoric can encourage the audience to focus on one end over other competing ends. In addition to a rational appeal to the opinions discussed in Book I, this can also be done by means of emotional appeals and artful delivery. While these rhetorical devices are distinguished from rational appeal, they are not strictly irrational; rather, they too involve a form of rhetorical reasoning and in turning to them, we continue to move towards a fuller picture of human rationality and its role in persuasion.

II. The Rational Basis of Emotional Appeals

Aristotle opens Book II of the *Rhetoric* by noting again the limits of rational appeal. He says it is not enough merely to present arguments or demonstrations in a rhetorical appeal; one must consider one's own self-presentation and also the disposition

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[126] In the *Ethics*, Aristotle considers moral opinions in a more dialectical fashion, but even there he only subtly points out the conflicts in moral views. For example, in her investigation of Book V of the *Ethics*, Collins (2004) explains how Aristotle's discussion of the individual virtues reveals underlying tensions. The overall problem is that virtue is supposed to be pursued as an end-in-itself, but it must also look to other, potentially conflicting ends. Collins focuses on the tensions within justice: the just man looks towards individual perfection (justice in particular presents itself as the highest virtue), but he must also be oriented towards the overall good of the community, which may come into conflict with his own individual pursuit of virtue.

of the audience. Character appeal is a matter of presenting oneself as a person of "prudence, virtue, and goodwill" so as to engender trust in the audience (1377a8). Such an appeal largely relies on reflecting the audience's concerns and honoring what the audience respects. More important for present purposes is Aristotle's discussion of emotional appeal. As Aristotle notes, a person's disposition will have a great effect on his perception and interpretation of events—for example, "things…do not appear the same to those who are angry as to those who remain calm, but appear either altogether different or different in magnitude" (1377b31-78a1)—so a speaker may need to influence the audience's disposition, making people more favorable to his argument and more receptive to his proposals. Corresponding with its important role, more than half of Book II addresses emotional appeal, first with an analysis of important emotions (2.2-11) and then with a consideration of typical character types and their emotional predispositions (2.12-17).

While emotional appeal is formally distinguished from rational appeal, this is not to say that emotional appeal is irrational or that it involves an appeal to irrational parts of the soul. This was a mistake made by previous rhetoricians, who focused almost exclusively on emotional appeal and its capacity to control audiences.[127] If the emotions were simply irrational, the capacity to influence the emotions through speech would be

[127] When Aristotle introduces emotional appeal in 1.2 as one of the primary means of persuasion, he says, "it is on this and only this matter, we claim, that the current technical-writers (τεχνολογοῦντας) attempt to exert themselves" (1356a16-17).

very mysterious—so much so that this is the reason that rhetoricians such as Gorgias and Thrasymachus could liken emotional appeals to incantations and enchantments.[128] However, an orator does not have such an immediate access to the emotions; rather, the whole notion of an emotional *appeal* is that a speaker evokes emotions by means of speech alone. The difficulty is seeing how speech (*logos*) intersects with the seemingly irrational (*alogos*). Aristotle's analysis of the emotions provides an answer to this question by correcting the false dichotomy made between emotions and rationality. Indeed, the most important aspect of Aristotle's analysis of the emotions is that he identifies in each case the rational component of the emotions. This, in turn, allows for an understanding of how emotional appeals are actually a form of *persuasion*, wherein a speaker appeals to the judgment of the audience. Aristotle's analysis of the emotions and emotional appeal thus provides a more complete account of rhetorical reasoning and the role of rationality in the psychology of persuasion.

Aristotle's account of the emotions focuses on fourteen different emotions, which are linked in pairs.[129] In this analysis, he identifies the different desires, sensations, and thoughts that are at work in a given emotion. The analysis of anger is illustrative of how Aristotle identifies the different components. He first defines anger as "a desire for

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[128] See Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* 10, 14, and Plato's *Phaedrus*, 267c7-d1.

[129] These pairs are: anger (2.2) and calmness (2.3); (friendly) love and hate (2.4); fear and confidence (2.5); shame and shamelessness (2.6); graciousness (χάρις) and unkindliness (2.7); pity (2.8) and indignation (2.9); and envy (2.10) and emulation (2.11). I will offer a relatively brief analysis of the overall pattern of these chapters. For an extensive analysis of each of these chapters, see Sokolon (2006), pp. 51-163.

revenge, accompanied by pain, on account of (διά) an apparent belittling of oneself or one's own, the belittling being unjustified" (1378a30-33).[130] Aristotle continues, adding that "a certain feeling of pleasure follows every feeling of anger from the hope of getting revenge; for it is pleasant to imagine one will attain the things one longs for" (1378b1-3). Aristotle probably puts so much emphasis on belittling because honor and status are very important concerns for most people, but he later expands on his definition, noting that people become angry at *any* frustrated desire: "That is why people who are sick, poor, in love (ἐρῶντες), in thirst, and in general in the grip of unfulfilled desire, are prone to anger and easily aroused, especially against those who belittle their present distress" (1379a16-19).

The most important thing to notice in this analysis is the rational aspect of the emotional response: a particular thought, belief, or judgment is an essential cause of the emotion. With anger, there is a perception of a slight and a judgment that it is undeserved. Other emotions similarly have an essential rational component. For instance, pity is pain at what is deemed the undeserved suffering by someone with whom one identifies (l385bl5-20). The feeling of (friendly) love is similarly based on an identified kinship (1381a1-20) and it involves "wishing for someone the things which we think good" (1380b35-40). Even an emotion as primal as fear is based on the judgment that a

[130] I am following here Fortenbaugh's translation of the passage (1975, p.12). Fortenbaugh emphasizes that Aristotle uses διά ("on account of") rather than μετά ("with"), signifying a *causal* rather than merely correlative relationship.

harm is likely and imminent; in particular, Aristotle emphasizes the role of imagination in fear, as people anticipate future suffering, death, and destruction (1382a28-35). To be sure, in each emotion there is an essential bodily component at work as well, but the emotion cannot be *reduced* to the physiological response.[131] This is to say that emotions are not simply wholly irrational forces; rather, thought is also at work in the emotions.

Along with the thoughts, beliefs, and judgments that play a causal role in the emotions, it should be noted that their *ends* (i.e. the final cause) are also not simply irrational: the ends listed in Aristotle's discussion include such concerns as honor, health, friends, loves, and pleasures—all of which are types of goods discussed in Book I regarding rational appeal. In the Book I discussion, these ends are treated as the objects of rational desire (wishing for what is good; 1369a3-4). The emotions are similar to the desires in focusing on particular ends, but the emotions have a more complicated character: whereas desire, in Aristotle's analysis, entails a "reaching out" (ὄρεξις) for a good, the emotions are distinguished because they each involve more complex responses towards something that relates to the desired end. For example, anger aims at destroying

[131] In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle does not say much about the bodily or material basis of the emotions, though when he discusses emotional predispositions, he briefly mentions a physiological basis, saying that elderly people are prone to fearfulness and young people are more prone to anger because "[the former] are chilled while the latter are heated" (1389b31). This corresponds to Aristotle's discussion in *On the Soul*, where he says, for example, that anger is not only a craving for revenge but also "a boiling of the blood and heat around the heart" (403a30-b1). In that context, Aristotle identifies the perceived slight and the craving for revenge as the formal causes of the emotion, in contrast to the material or bodily causes.

what unjustifiably thwarts a desire, fear seeks to flee threats to one's good, and friendliness aims at joining or helping those who support or share a view of what is good.

In highlighting the rational desires, intentional ends, judgments, and beliefs involved in the emotions, Aristotle thus reveals the rational aspect of the emotions. This is an important point for understanding rhetoric because it is this rational element that makes the emotions open to being influenced by speech. It must be granted that not all aspects of emotional appeal by speech are aimed at opinions or premises. As Aristotle describes in Book III, much of persuasion depends on style and delivery; for an emotional appeal, in particular, the volume, rhythm, and harmony of the voice are important factors as they should reflect the emotion in order to evoke it in the audience (3.7).[132] In this context, Aristotle notes that sophistic speakers often evoke emotions by falsely imitating emotional reactions. Nevertheless, even in these cases of emotional appeal, it is necessary to see that the audience is still exercising judgment: namely, they are *inferring* that the emotional display is indicative of the circumstances that have so moved the speaker. Aristotle describes the inference as follows:

> the soul *makes a logical error* (παραλογίζεται), as though the speaker were telling the truth, because people feel that way in such circumstances, and so they suppose the facts to be so, even if they are not as the speaker

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[132] Walker (2000) is helpful for correcting Fortenbaugh (1972, p. 17) on this point, showing that while Aristotle is critical of Gorgias and other earlier rhetoricians, he is not completely different in his understanding of rhetoric and so he grants the great importance of style and delivery.

says. The listener always sympathizes with the passionate speaker, even if there is nothing to what he says. This is the reason that many [speakers] bring down (καταπλήττουσι) their listeners by making confused noise. (1408a20-25, my emphasis).[133]

It is important, then, to mimic the emotion when making an emotional appeal, but the *content* of the appeal is equally important because it is what actually shapes and gives direction to an emotion. That is, one must appeal to the particular thoughts or beliefs involved in specific emotions. To evoke anger, for example, a speaker reminds the audience of their concerns, be it for honor or some other desire, and he shows how these concerns have been thwarted by particular events or people. In order to shape the anger, he focuses on the causal premises of the emotion: anger is a desire for revenge on account of a perceived belittling, so the speaker focuses on the belittling, highlighting the insolence (ὕβρις) of the dishonor (1378b30) and describing the insult as voluntary and unjustified. Conversely, to calm the audience, the speaker might argue that the harm was unintentional or justified (correcting the judgment that leads to anger) or he might point out that the guilty party has already been suitably punished, so vengeance is unnecessary. Another example is pity: to encourage pity, the speaker should emphasize the ways that the sufferer is similar to the audience (so they could imagine themselves in the sufferer's

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[133] The error at work here is called "affirming the consequent" (or the "fallacy of the consequent"): the audience assumes that since the emotion is a response to certain situations, then the situation must be so. See Aristotle's discussion of this logical fallacy in 2.24, 1401b20-29.

place) and he should stress that the suffering is undeserved. To encourage a sense of gratitude, the speaker should remind the listeners of the good things they have received and emphasize the sacrifice this required from the benefactor.

To see more clearly how rhetoric appeals to the causal opinions of emotions, it is helpful to consider an actual speech. In his history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides recounts many masterful speeches, and his presentation of the Mytilenian debate in particular exemplifies how a speaker appeals to the premises of anger. The debate centers on the fate of Mytilene, an island-state that was subject to the Athenian Empire but left relatively free, being allowed to maintain its own laws and contribute troops to the Athenians. After the Mytilenians rebelled, Cleon gave a speech advocating the wholesale slaughter of their men and enslavement of their women and children. The speech is a masterwork of demagogic anger and outrage, and Cleon's appeals nicely reflect Aristotle's discussion of anger. For instance, Cleon claims that the Mytilenians "have done you greater injustice than any other single city" (3.39.1), he repeatedly points to their hubris and ingratitude (3.39.2-4), and he stresses the deliberate nature of their crime: "Their offense was not involuntary, but of malice and deliberate, and mercy is only for unwilling offenders" (3.40.1). Cleon's palpable rage is infectious, but it is important to note that he is not simply shouting incoherently. Rather, he appeals to the premises of anger in order to enrage the audience and convince them to act against the Mytilenians.

Returning to Aristotle's analysis of emotional appeal, one might thus say that the speaker persuades the audience to experience an emotion by appealing to the thoughts

and beliefs that are causal elements of the emotions. What is especially significant is that Aristotle refers to these thoughts and beliefs as the "premises" (προτάσεις; 1378a27) of an emotion. In doing so, he makes clear that emotional and rational appeal overlap because they both rely on enthymemes or quasi-syllogistic arguments. In practice, the speaker will not syllogistically spell out all of these premises; rather, he uses enthymemes and so he draws on the implicit understandings and propensities of the audience, explicitly appealing to premises only to the extent necessary to evoke an emotional response. As an example of the enthymemic character of emotional appeals, recall the discussion in the previous chapter of the *Gettysburg Address*. In Lincoln's speech, he evokes feelings of love and gratitude for the dead by reminding the audience members of their shared commitments to the ideals of the *Declaration of Independence* and the sacrifice by the fallen to preserve those ideals. These are appeals to what Aristotle identifies as the premises of the love and gratitude: we feel attachment with "those to whom the same things are good" (1381a8) and for "those who have given [us] great benefit" (1381a11-12), and we feel gratitude for "service done for someone in need with nothing in return" (1385a17-19).

Up to this point I have stressed the rational character of emotional appeals and the similarity between emotional and rational appeals, but the more obvious point should not be overlooked that emotional appeals can have a broader effect on rational judgment. When Aristotle introduces the emotions for analysis, he says that they have the capacity to turn people's judgments one way or another: "Emotions are the things through which, being turned (μεταβάλλοντες), people come to differ in their judgments" (1378a19-20).

This capacity means that emotional appeals might run counter to the purpose of rational appeals by distracting or misleading judgment. It is this sort of abuse that Aristotle criticizes at the start of the *Rhetoric*, saying that emotional appeals are extraneous to speech and that it is inappropriate to lead the audience astray (1354a15-31). Nevertheless, as previously discussed, Aristotle relaxes this criticism in subsequent chapters and he grants that emotional appeals may be necessary to support rational argumentation. At the very least, a speaker may need to use emotional appeals to counteract a hostile disposition of the audience, whether it is preexisting or if it has been spurred by another speaker. In this regard, Diodotus's speech in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* (3.42-3.48) is a good example of the need to defuse an audience's anger before presenting one's own argument. In the Mytilenian debate described above, Cleon clearly uses emotional appeals to enrage the audience. Diodotus's counter-speech does not exactly follow the format Aristotle discusses of an appeal to calmness—meaning that he does not argue that no harm was done or that it was unintentional—but he argues against acting for the sake of revenge, warning that following Cleon's proposal and destroying the Mytilenians will do far more harm to the Athenians than good.

Emotional appeals may therefore be required for remedial purposes, but there are also other ways that they may assist rational arguments. Specifically, an emotional appeal might be used to add weight to an argument that would not be sufficiently appreciated otherwise. If, for example, the speaker is making a proposal for security, it might not be enough to argue that establishing a proper defense is advantageous, as there may be other, seemingly more pressing ends that the people would prefer to pursue. In this case, an

emotional appeal may be required to focus the audience on the concern they are overlooking. Again, Aristotle describes fear as a pain based on a judgment that a harm is likely and imminent. Accordingly, to evoke fear, the speaker might concentrate on the potential harm, describing it vividly and emphasizing its imminence in order to make the concern more pressing.[134] Additionally, to dissuade the audience from ignoring a threat, the speaker might appeal to their shame. In his analysis of shame (2.6), Aristotle describes shame as the pain caused by acts that seem disgraceful to a person and to those for whom he cares (1383b12-18). In particular, Aristotle describes *sight* as an important factor in shame: he notes that people seek to hide their faces when ashamed as if to avoid being seen (1385a10-13), and he quotes a proverb, "Shame is in the eyes."[135] To evoke shame, then, the speaker should do more than argue that a course of action is disadvantageous or harmful; he should describe the disgrace, calling it a betrayal of the community's ideals, and he should especially describe what the act will look like to others.

An example of a speech that masterfully uses emotional appeals to fear and shame in support of a broader argument is Demosthenes's *Third Philippic*. In this speech

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[134] In a chapter of the *Politics* on preserving regimes (5.8), Aristotle says that the rulers may need to evoke fear to ensure that the citizens are vigilant and guard over the regime. To do so, he explains, the ruler must stress the imminence of the threat in order to "make the far away near" (*Politics*, 1308a26-30).

[135] Aristotle generally uses the word αἰσχύνη for shame in 2.6, but the proverb quoted uses an alternative, more ceremonial word, αἰδῶ, which may include a sense of reverence or awe. The full sentence is: "Things that happen in front of people's eyes and in plain sight cause more shame (from which comes the proverb, 'Shame (αἰδῶ) is in the eyes" (1384a33-34).

(delivered in 341 BC), Demosthenes advises the Athenians to prepare for the inevitable war against Philip of Macedon; the Athenians had ignored the Macedonian threat for years, accepting Philip's pretexts and claims of peacefulness while he gradually expanded and encroached on Athenian territory. To draw their attention to the reality of the threat, Demosthenes seeks to evoke fear in the audience: he emphasizes the urgency of the danger by pointing to Philip's conquests over surrounding states ("attacking and enslaving their cities," §22), describing the fate of the citizens ("they are slaves, whipped and butchered"; §66), and warning that it is nearly too late to stop this threat.[136] To evoke shame, he attacks what he identifies as the disgraceful behavior by the idle Athenians: the "indolence and indifference" of ignoring the threat (§5) and the "foolishness and cowardice" of hoping that Philip will be peaceful (§67). Further, he describes how the Athenians appear to others: to Philip, they are simple-minded fools who are easily duped; to the rest of Greece, they are small-minded and greedy ("All Hellenes see and hear these [threats]…but we look on while the man becomes greater, each one thinking to profit during this time when another is destroyed," §28-29); and, most importantly, to the ancestors who fought off past foreign invaders, the Athenians are betraying their legacy:

> What then is the cause of these things [Philip's insolent acts]? For it was not without reason and just cause that the Hellenes were once so ready to defend freedom and now to be slaves. There was something then, there

[136] Translation from Kennedy (2007).

> was, O Men of Athens, something in the minds of the people that is not there now, something that defeated the wealth of Persia and kept Hellas free. (§36)
>
> If you think the people of Chalcis are going to save Hellas, or the Megarians, while you run away from events, you are not thinking rightly; for it is enough for them if each can save themselves. You must do this. To you your ancestors bequeathed this honor, acquired through many dangers. (§74)

Demosthenes's speech illustrates well how emotional appeals can be used in support of a broader persuasive effort. These emotional appeals also demonstrate Aristotle's claim that there is a rational basis to the emotions and emotional appeals. Demosthenes appeals to the judgment of the audience and the emotional response requires an agreement with the premises of the appeal, namely that there is a threat and that Athenian idleness in the face of that threat does appear shameful.

The notion of using emotional appeals in support of rational argument offers some insight on the question that closed the previous section: How can a speaker focus an audience on one end over other competing ends? As described, emotional appeals can give weight to one consideration over another, which means that such appeals could shift the balance between two considerations. To use a different metaphor based on the examples above, the emotional appeal might make one consideration seem more imminent, more pressing, or it might make the consideration more vivid and apparent to

the audience. Emotional appeals offer one way of focusing the audience on an end, but this is also a broader function of rhetorical speech. To consider this issue more fully, it is necessary to turn to the final book of the *Rhetoric*, where Aristotle discusses the arrangement and delivery of speeches.

III. Style and Delivery: Giving an Argument Activity and Prominence

As with Books I and II, Aristotle opens Book III with a short, idealized account of rhetoric, saying that that the "just thing" would be "to contend one's case by means of the facts themselves" and not worry about extraneous matters such as style or ornamentation (1404a5-6). He quickly grants, however, that this is not possible. At first Aristotle says that this is because of the flawed character of general audiences, who are unable to follow and appreciate rational arguments and so are in need of assistance. As Aristotle goes on, however, he admits that any form of teaching or demonstration must have some concern with presentation—it is not enough for a speaker to have the correct thoughts if nobody can understand his meaning. In short order, then, Aristotle corrects idealistic concerns about rhetorical style. In the remainder of the book, he offers a guide as to how proper presentation can be a powerful support for rational argument.

Book III explores wording (λέξις, 3.1-12) and arrangement (τάξις, 3.13-19) in great technical detail, covering such topics as grammatical correctness (2.5), appropriate rhythmic patterns (2.8), the purpose of the different parts of a speech (e.g. introduction, narrative, proof; 2.14-17), and even when jokes or irony may be used (2.18). The general lesson regarding style, however, can be summed up in two points. First, and most

importantly, a speech and its message should be clear. As Aristotle says at the beginning of the investigation, the primary "virtue of wording" is clarity (1404b1-2). At the same time, however, a speech should not be *too* clear as to be tedious or commonplace. The second point, then, is that a speech should incorporate a degree of the strange, foreign, or out of place (ξένος; 1404b8-13). This is so as to intrigue the audience and invite their curiosity. As Aristotle frequently says in Book III, there is a natural pleasure that comes from wonder and learning, particularly when the learning occurs quickly without much struggle. Regarding appropriate wording, for example, he says, "to learn easily is naturally pleasant for everyone, and words signify something, so those words that make us learn are pleasurable" (1410b10-11).[137] Along with the pleasure that comes from learning, another key aspect of inviting the audience to think is that they need to complete the argument themselves; through such an activity, they are apt to make the ideas their own and thereby be persuaded more readily. To facilitate quick learning, good rhetoric should be clear enough to be readily understood, but foreign enough that it requires the listeners' participation in completing the arguments. As a point of contrast, Aristotle points to sophists who go too far, using overly strange, grandiloquent speeches to obfuscate matters and distract the audience from the actual argument (see 3.2).

There are many points worth considering in Book III, but in regards to the psychology of persuasion, the most important is what Aristotle says concerning how an

[137] See also 1371a31-33, 1404b11-12, 1409b2, as well as *Physics*, 247b17-248a3, and the opening of the *Metaphysics*.

orator can focus the audience by making an idea active and bringing it to life. Aristotle most clearly describes this capacity in his discussion of the metaphor, which he identifies as the rhetorical device that best encompasses the goals of rhetorical style: "the metaphor, most of all, has in it something clear, pleasant, and foreign" (1405a8-9). Throughout his discussion of the metaphor, Aristotle describes its capacity to make certain thoughts more vivid and imminent, saying repeatedly that the metaphor has the power to put an idea "before the eyes" (πρὸ ὀμμάτων; 1411b22-35). He also frequently says that a metaphor can give a statement "activity" or "energy" (ἐνέργεια; see 1411b22-1412a10). An example of metaphor that Aristotle gives is from Pericles' funeral oration, where he amplifies the significance of the loss by saying, "the youth who perished in the war disappeared from the city as if someone had stolen spring from the year" (1411a2-4).[138]

While Aristotle mostly uses such phrases to describe the power of metaphors, the point applies more generally to the category of what he calls elegant (ἀστεῖος) speech. For instance, he says that when predicting the future, one should speak in the present tense to put an idea "before the eyes" of the audience (1410b34). He also says that along with metaphor, an artful contrast of points (*antithesis*) can give a statement "energy" (1410b36, 1412b33). More generally, aspects of this 'energizing' capacity can be seen in various rhetorical techniques Aristotle discusses, such as amplification, repetition, evocative figures of speech, as well as emotional appeal—these techniques have the

[138] Aristotle also refers to this line at 1365a31, though it is not present in Thucydides's account of the funeral oration (2.35-46).

capacity to make certain considerations more vivid and have more prominence in the listener's mind. One can see this in the Demosthenes speech discussed above. Along with the emotional appeals, Demosthenes uses exaggeration (enslaved cities) as well as vivid imagery ("they are slaves, whipped and butchered"), and the claim that all of Greece is watching Athens is an almost direct application of putting an idea "before the eyes." All of these rhetorical devices strengthen Demosthenes's argument, making the Macedonian threat all the more imminent to the audience and thus encouraging them to accept the proposal to prepare for war.

Aristotle thus claims that the artful use of rhetorical techniques can make certain ideas and considerations more prominent in the listeners' minds. To understand how this works and its broader applicability to Aristotelian psychology, it is helpful to consider a very interesting similarity between Aristotle's account of elegant speech, on one hand, and *akrasia*, on the other. To clarify the comparison, it is necessary to recall a few points from my analysis of *akrasia* in Chapter 1 above. The common sense understanding of *akrasia* is that a person *knows* something is bad, but he is nevertheless overwhelmed by desire and acts against his better judgment. The problem with this understanding is that it is overly dualistic, ignoring the interconnection of thought and desire. In the case of *akrasia*, it is more accurate to say that there are two competing notions of what is good interconnected with two competing desires (e.g. for pleasure, on one hand, and for health or noble restraint, on the other). In his analysis, Aristotle treats this conflict as a case of two competing practical syllogisms. In the abstract, these alternatives are held in balance because the person is confused as to what is good (and so he has inconsistent thoughts

and desires). At the moment of *akratic* choice, however, Aristotle notes that a particular desire is present—and significantly, he says that this makes the *premise* of the choice "active" (ἐνεργεῖ; NE 1147a33). The immediate presence of the desire thus makes the opinion that a particular pleasure is good more prominent in the person's mind and he acts on that opinion. As a point of further clarification, recall that Aristotle says in *On the Soul* that when a person acts for the sake of immediate desire, he is choosing the good that seems *more real*: "what is immediately pleasant appears to be both simply pleasant and *simply good* on account of not looking to the future" (S 433b8-10, my emphasis). This "simply good" alternative is in contrast to an abstract or distant good such as the idea that health or the noble is good—the person can recite the words of an argument supporting these claims, but he does not fully believe that they are good (see NE 1147b10-12). The important point here is that a desire makes one conception of the good more prominent—and it does so, Aristotle says, by making the premise of one line of thought more "active."

To apply this notion back to the *Rhetoric*, it is necessary to draw on the entire psychology of persuasion presented so far in this chapter. As discussed in section one, the enthymeme is analogous to the practical syllogism: whereas the practical syllogism captures the thought structure of an action, the enthymeme represents the thought structure of a rhetorical appeal. Similarly, just as the practical syllogism draws out the implicit view of the good that a person acts upon, the implicit premises of the enthymeme represent the end a speaker ultimately appeals to in an argument. As further discussed in section two, the enthymeme is not limited to rational appeal; the emotions also have an

enthymemic character wherein the premises represent the judgments and beliefs that are essential components of the emotion. The question regarding enthymemes and rhetorical appeals was: How does a speaker focus the audience on one end over others when there are multiple competing goods that might be of concern?

In answer to this question, Aristotle's analysis of style and delivery suggests that, as in the competing choices of *akrasia*, rhetorical appeals make the premises of certain ideas more "active." Through the use of vivid images, artful description, emotional appeals, well-timed repetition, dwelling on a subject, and other such techniques, rhetoric can make certain ends clearer, more pressing, or simply seem more real—all different ways of saying that persuasion influences choice by highlighting particular premises, giving them a special prominence in the minds of the audience. Walker (2000) describes this process well, calling these rhetorical devices "techniques of emphasis that lend psychological prominence and memorability—or what Aristotle calls *energeia*—to particular sets of 'premises' while shifting others into the background or margins of attention" (p.85).[139] Through such rhetorical techniques, a speaker can thus encourage an audience to choose one end over other competing possibilities.

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[139] Walker also points to the similarity between Aristotle's discussion of rhetorical *energeia* and what Chaim Perelman refers to as "techniques of presence" in *The New Rhetoric* (1969). I should note that Walker believes that this interpretation of the *Rhetoric* is in some ways at odds with Aristotle's other works and he claims that such an account of persuasion is "not quite 'Aristotelian' … [and] quite probably at odds with what Aristotle himself preferred" (p.76). By contrast, my interpretation of Aristotle's psychological works points to the compatibility of this account with Aristotle's other works.

One further similarity between *akrasia* and artful appeal is worth considering. In *akrasia*, it is not simply the case that the individual has immoderate thoughts and desires that he acts on; he also has a broader view of what is good for him, but he fails to appreciate the truth of this long term good. The self-controlled individual, by contrast, has a clearer view of his good and does not act against it for the sake of immediate gratification. Through the use of artful rhetoric, a speaker may try to draw the audience members' attention to concerns they only partially appreciate. In the Demosthenes speech, for example, he is not introducing entirely new concepts or concerns to the audience; there is surely some awareness and concern regarding the Macedonian threat, but it is vague and distant, eclipsed by the more pressing concerns of daily business. Demosthenes uses his rhetorical powers to draw the audience's attention to the threat, amplifying what fear they feel and appealing to their shame and sense of civic pride in order to give weight to the more distant concern that they do not clearly see. This general need for rhetoric to focus the audience on certain ends is suggested early on in the *Rhetoric* when Aristotle comments on the nature of audiences, saying that rhetoric is aimed at "the kinds of listeners who are not capable of seeing many things together or of reasoning from a distant starting point" (1357a3-4). General audiences tend to be shortsighted, focusing on what is immediately attainable or desirable; rhetoric can shift the audience's focus by making distant or abstract ends more immediate and more readily understood. It is in this way that rhetoric can help guide and improve the decisions made by the audience. I will discuss this potential of rhetoric more in the next chapter, but first I must qualify the degree to which rhetoric engages the audience's rationality.

IV. The Role of (Limited) Rationality in Rhetoric

Throughout his account of persuasion, Aristotle stresses the role of rationality in rhetoric. This does not, however, serve as a vindication of what one might call the objective rationality of rhetoric. That is, claiming that rhetoric must engage the rationality of the audience does not mean that rhetoric only leads people to act in light of the truth or some highest objective good. To draw again on the analogy from *akrasia*: I focused on *akrasia* in Chapter 1 in order to demonstrate the role of rationality in choice, even in those instances that seem most irrational. I argued that thought is not truly "overwhelmed" by desire; rather, thought is present throughout choice as a person acts on a conception of the good. However, even if thought is present, this does not mean the person is acting in an objectively rational way and choosing what is actually the best end. Rather, he is confused, acting according to inconsistent thoughts and desires. By highlighting the role of thought in choice, the analysis of *akrasia* helps identify the way in which the person is confused. A similar point can be made about rhetoric. I have tried to clarify the broad role of rationality within rhetoric: rational appeals draw on implicit beliefs regarding what is good, emotional appeals are directed at the causal premises of emotions, and artful style is an attempt to direct the audience's attention and engage their judgment. Rationality is present, but this does not mean that rhetoric cannot be used for ill intent. A speaker can lie to the audience, misdirect their attention, and take advantage of their poor judgment. The important point in regards to identifying the underlying rationality of rhetoric is that it is a necessary step for explaining how rhetoric works and for staging a broader defense of the possible uses of rhetoric in politics.

The key to understanding rhetoric is seeing that its persuasive power is not mysterious; rhetoric does not somehow tap into entirely irrational forces and take control of the audience. Rather, to *persuade* an audience, one must appeal to their judgment and engage them in a form of reasoning. This rhetorical reasoning is flawed, and rhetoric is a limited art, but it nevertheless has the potential to aid in political guidance, helping the audience come to conclusions that they would not reach by themselves. Assessing the power and limits of rhetoric is only possible when one correctly identifies the character and scope of rationality in rhetoric.

Having discussed the *Rhetoric* now at some length, I will turn in the next chapter to conclude by drawing together the lessons of Aristotelian psychology and the psychology of persuasion. I will discuss what this psychology reveals regarding the character of human rationality, the possibilities and limits of rhetoric, and how all of this can serve as a corrective to contemporary political psychology and its understanding of rhetoric.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

In the final chapter of the *Rhetoric* (3.19), Aristotle offers advice on conclusions. He says that a speaker should demonstrate his own truthfulness and the falsity of his opponents, amplify or understate the importance of his case (perhaps by showing where it may lead), move the audience to an emotional reaction, and remind the audience of what has been said, showing them the speech delivered what it promised. Lacking a warped (1354a24) or corrupt (1404a8) audience, I will forego emotional appeal, but the other suggestions offer a helpful structure for proceeding.

The purpose of this study has been to explore how rhetorical persuasion works and what this reveals about human rationality. In particular, I wanted to consider how rhetoric can engage rationality in such a way as to avoid as much as possible the twin vices of pandering and manipulation; it is in this way that rhetoric can best be defended as a legitimate part of political guidance. Having discussed Aristotle's psychology of choice and the *Rhetoric* in some detail, I will in this chapter draw together my interpretation of the psychology of persuasion. Additionally, I sought to demonstrate the relevance of Aristotle's thought for contemporary theories of political psychology, so I will contrast Aristotelian political psychology with the flawed assumptions of bounded rationality theory and its application to politics. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of Aristotle's broader defense of rhetoric, which includes the political and philosophical uses of rhetoric.

I. Limited (But Not Bounded) Rationality

Regarding the theory of bounded rationality, recall that its focus is the limits of human rationality. People have limitations in terms of awareness, attention, and the capacity to process information. To cope with these limits, they rely on mental shortcuts ("heuristics") when interpreting the world and deciding how to act. Overreliance on these shortcuts leaves people prone to systematic errors in their decisions ("cognitive biases"). In order to influence people, one can target these errors, shaping circumstances to have an appropriate "choice architecture" so as to trigger desired responses. At the core of this mechanistic view of choice is the idea that rationality is solely instrumental, meaning that reason is only used for the calculation of means to desired ends. Herbert Simon, who pioneered the theory of bounded rationality, sums up this conception of reason as follows:

> Reason, taken by itself, is instrumental. It can't select our final goals, nor can it mediate for us in pure conflicts over what final goal to pursue—we have to settle these issues in some other way. All reason can do is help us reach agreed-on goals more efficiently (1983, p. 106).

According to this view, calculation can be shaped and directed by desires and emotions, but thought itself has no influence on the ends of action. Indeed, reason is incapable of even justifying ends; they are, as Simon puts it, only arbitrary commitments set down by "human fiat" (1957a, p.56)

Before turning to an Aristotelian response to this narrow conception of human rationality, I should note that there are actually several points of potential agreement between Aristotle and bounded rationality theorists. First, Aristotle would agree with the most basic notion of rational choice. That is, if one ignores the specific claims regarding the character of reasoning, Aristotle agrees that rationality plays an essential role in all choice: people have reasons for why they act and choice has an intentional character, aiming at particular ends. He would thus agree with Simon's claim that "people almost always have reasons for what they do but seldom the 'best' reasons" (1995, p. 47). Regarding the notion that we seldom act for the 'best' reasons, Aristotle would also agree with the basic correction bounded rationality theory made to the earlier rational choice theory: human reason is limited, we have limited awareness of the world, and we often make errors in our decisions. A major argument of bounded rationality is that because of this limited awareness, people can only attend to a few features of their environment, which means that they will have a selective, even skewed perspective in their understanding. In this regard, bounded rationality theorists would probably be interested in Aristotle's thoughts on the active role of imagination in perception. As Aristotle describes it, we are not neutral observers passively absorbing everything in our environment; rather, perception is the result of an active interpretation of sensory information.[140] In turn, Aristotle would probably be interested in the empirical studies of

[140] See *On the Soul* 425a14-429a9 and Nussbaum (1985), pp. 221-269, for a discussion of the active role of imagination in perception.

cognitive heuristics and biases. Aristotle discusses flawed patterns of reasoning in a chapter of the *Rhetoric* (2.24), as well as in the whole of the *Sophistical Refutations*, and so he would probably be intrigued by the catalogue of errors surveyed by modern psychology. With that said, he would draw different conclusions from these observations, as he does not adhere to a merely instrumental view of reason.

Even regarding instrumental reasoning, however, there is not complete disagreement. Instrumental reason has an important place in Aristotle's psychology of choice, as choice does largely proceed by way of determining means to desired ends. However, thought is not limited to calculation; it also plays a crucial role in shaping our ends and desires. On this point, Aristotle is simply more consistent than the bounded rationality theorists. That is, the latter group correctly claims that perception is not immediate: there is complex mental activity underlying perception whereby an individual interprets sensory data. Yet bounded rationality theorists do not apply this insight to the desires themselves. Instead, desires are treated as brute facts or raw sensations that are fully formed and somehow able to posit coherent ends and preferences. Aristotle rejects this notion. At the root of desire, there may be a sensation of need, but this requires interpretation to take form as a coherent need and desire *for something*. Even at the most basic level, thought plays a role in shaping desire. This is what I referred to as the constitutive role of thought in desire. More broadly, when it comes to making choices, even if the choice is largely a matter of calculating means to ends, there is room for clarifying what those ends are, what it is that we are seeking, and generally why we act for certain ends.

An important step for understanding the choices we make is looking beyond immediate ends. Choice is intentional; we act for the sake of certain ends, but these ends point beyond themselves, revealing that they are actually means to higher or broader ends. Aristotle's analysis suggests that when one draws out the reasoning of a choice—the determining of means, to immediate ends, to ever higher ends—one will find that the reasoning ultimately leads to an idea of the good and happiness. Interestingly, Simon acknowledged this point early in his career, but he quickly dismissed its importance. It is worth quoting him at length on this issue:

> Since most imperatives are not ends-in-themselves but intermediate ends, the question of their appropriateness to the more final ends at which they are aimed remains a factual question […] A municipal department may take as its objective the providing of recreation to the city's inhabitants. This aim may then be further analyzed as a means towards "building healthier bodies," "using leisure time constructively," "preventing juvenile delinquency," and a host of others, until the chain of means and ends is traced into a vague realm labeled "the good life." At this point the means-ends connections become so conjectural (e.g. the relation between recreation and character), and the content of the values so ill defined (e.g. "happiness"), that the analysis becomes valueless for administrative purposes (1957a, p. 50).

Simon is right that for the *immediate* purpose of predicting behavior in an institutional context, one need not consider ultimate or final ends: the administrator is given a fixed end (e.g. providing recreation) and he must determine what policies will best attain that objective. At any other level of analysis, however, one must ask about the broader ends. For example, one might ask about the source of the administrative objective, as a decision was made by a higher authority (such as the mayor) that certain resources should be allocated for providing recreation, resources that could have been otherwise directed towards infrastructure, public safety, or education. Such a decision is made by reference to a view of the broader good of the citizens.[141] Similarly, if one looks at the source of other policies or laws, including the highest laws encoded in a constitution, one will find a view of what is good for the citizens, whether that is understood in terms of individual liberty, social justice, or the strictures of sacred texts.

Alternatively, one might ask about the individual administrator. Simon's claim that it is unnecessary to consider the broader ends applies only if the individual has already chosen to act as a loyal administrator and carry out given policies. I discussed a similar case in Chapter 1 regarding Aristotle's example of a doctor's actions. In the *Ethics*, he says, "a doctor does not deliberate whether he will cure someone […] nor does

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[141] If one adheres to the rational choice inspired assumption that politicians are "single-minded seekers of re-election" (Mayhew, 1974), then the concern with the citizens' good is indirect. In this model, the politician creating the policy is immediately concerned with his own good (staying in office), but this still requires considering what policies the citizens will believe serve the good of the community.

anyone else deliberate about ends, but *having set down the end*, they consider in what way and by what means it would be the case" (1112b11-16, my emphasis). As I explained, this instrumental reasoning applies only when the ends have already been set and the doctor is acting *qua* doctor.[142] In other circumstances, the doctor might ask whether he should apply his art and heal the patient. Furthermore, he had to make an earlier decision to become a doctor in the first place. In making such a choice, the individual must ask whether this is the best profession for him to pursue, or whether some other way of life would be better, such as the administrator's, the political figure's, or something else altogether. To answer these questions, he would have to consider his alternatives in light of a broader view of the good.

Simon is in a way correct when he says that the idea of the good or happiness is vague and conjectural: it is difficult to gain clarity on such issues. Nevertheless, it is imperative to ask about the ultimate ends that people pursue. For one thing, it is necessary if we are to understand the motivation underlying a choice. As Simon grants, "most imperatives are not ends-in-themselves but intermediate ends." However, these intermediate ends do not answer the question of *why* the person is choosing to act this way. To understand choice, it is necessary to look to the broader ends that a person seeks to achieve through his actions. As Storing puts it in his critique of Simon's work, "Simon

[142] See pp. 49-50 above.

seems to suggest that we can talk about 'more final goals' and yet 'more final goals' indefinitely, without ever reaching the question of final goals."[143]

Because theories of bounded rationality ignore final ends, they have a difficult time explaining action in light of conflicting ends, a difficulty that is particularly evident in regards to puzzling instances of irrational behavior such as the akratic who seems to act against his rational calculation.[144] A common approach in bounded rationality is to resort to a theory of multiple selves wherein different selves have different ends; in the case of akrasia, a myopic self acts for an immediate end over the preferences of a more farsighted self.[145] Such an approach yields some useful practical guidance for avoiding the loss of self-control, such as using pre-commitment strategies that guarantee tangible costs to counteract temptation.[146] However, this multiple selves solution does not explain why the person actually loses control to a different self—instead, the theory simply categorizes people as having either strong or weak "temporal preferences."[147] The problem with bounded rationality focusing only on intermediate ends is that it does not

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[143] Storing (1967), p. 72. In this context, Storing quotes another scholar (Waldo) who complains, "In reply to any question concerning [values], the logical positivist points to an escalator that ascends and ascends but never arrives anywhere."

[144] For a review of the difficulties of akrasia for behavioral economic theories, see Callahan (2008).

[145] See, for instance, Elster (2000) and Schelling (2006).

[146] See Thaler & Sunstein (2009) pp. 40-52 and their reliance on Elster's (1984) self-binding metaphor of "Ulysses and the Sirens."

[147] See Frederick, Loewenstein, and O'Donoghue (2002) for an extensive review of time preference theory.

allow ends to be compared, and thus it is impossible to determine why one end is preferred to another. By contrast, when one follows Aristotle's guidance and considers final ends, one can identify the uncertainties and confusions that are at work in akrasia. Specifically, it is not enough to say that some people have a preference for long term well-being and others for immediate gratification; in the case of loss of self-control, the person is confused as to what is actually good and he acts on what is immediate and tangible rather than a distant good that seems abstract and uncertain.

Another reason for looking to the broader ends of action is that when making a choice, we must weigh different immediate ends against each other. If there is to be any consistency in longer-term pursuits, it is necessary to rank and order one's ends. This weighing and ordering can only be done in light of a higher standard by which we can judge the more immediate ends. Attaining a clear ordering of ends is obviously difficult. Because of our limited rationality, we have a limited understanding of our world and of our own good. Within this limited understanding, we may often have conflicting and even contradictory opinions. Similarly, we are apt to have conflicting and contradictory desires. However, it is possible to identify these *as* conflicts and contradictions. Gaining such clarity is a necessary step for attempting to resolve or balance conflicts. Further, by identifying contradictions, we can examine the confusions and try to root out the contradictory views. Within the confines of limited rationality, there is room for gaining a degree of clarity and consistency, and thus improved rationality. However, the theory of bounded rationality rules out such improvement in advance because it restricts rationality to instrumental calculation. Bounded rationality is helpful for identifying flaws in

calculation, but given its narrow picture of human rationality, its broader use in understanding and guiding human life is limited. By contrast, Aristotle's analysis of choice takes place within a broader philosophical context, including the study of ethics and politics, and he is thus able to teach us how to look to higher ends and gain clarity regarding the most pressing human questions.

Clarifying the character of human rationality thus points to what can be gained by studying Aristotle's philosophic works. In the current study, however, I focused more specifically on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the psychology of persuasion. Here too Aristotle offers a valuable corrective to bounded rationality and its understanding of politics. More broadly, however, Aristotle's teaching offers an understanding of how rhetoric works, the place of rationality in rhetoric, and the potential rhetoric has for political guidance.

II. Engaging Rationality and Refining Opinion through Rhetoric

When bounded rationality is applied as a guide for influencing the public's choices, it adopts a model of "choice architecture" or the "engineering of choice." The idea is that by structuring the context of a choice, such as the manner in which different alternatives are presented, one can target characteristic errors in reasoning so as to trigger desired responses. I discussed several strategies regarding rhetoric and public opinion in the introductory chapter: specifically, agenda-setting, priming, and framing. These effects are explained in terms of particular cognitive biases (such as the "availability heuristic"), but the overall claim is that a speaker guides the audience members' limited attention,

shaping their awareness of a situation and thereby conditioning them to respond in a desired way.

While Aristotle does not discuss "priming" the audience before a speech, he is certainly aware that it is important to present one's case in a favorable light. For instance, one of his more humorous examples is of pirates referring to themselves as "procurement agents" (1405a26). More generally, he is also aware of the ways that a speaker might need to direct the audience's attention and focus towards certain alternatives over others. As discussed regarding rhetorical style, Aristotle says that a speaker can put ideas "before the eyes" of the audience, making these ideas more vivid and imminent. He also says that a speaker can bring ideas to life by giving them activity or energy (ἐνέργεια). In making certain ideas more vivid or active, the speaker might thereby shift the balance between conflicting ends. All of this is to say that Aristotle's analysis of rhetoric is open to the strategies described by bounded rationality—indeed, putting an idea "before the eyes" captures well the notion of framing alternatives in order to direct attention. Nevertheless, Aristotle presents these rhetorical techniques in a different light.

Most notably, he does not liken the speaker to an engineer who controls people like machines (or a sorcerer who casts a spell on them, as the sophists put it). Rather, Aristotle describes rhetoric as appealing to and engaging the rationality of the audience. The distinction is clearest in regards to emotional appeals. Bounded rationality models explain the effect of an emotional appeal in terms of an "affect heuristic": rather than going through the cognitive effort of attending to an argument and judging its content,

listeners are motivated by and decide based on an aroused emotional state.[148] Aristotle's analysis of emotional appeals suggests a partial agreement with this bounded rationality claim—emotional appeals will make an argument more active and draw more attention—but Aristotle goes further by explaining *how* the emotion is evoked. Specifically, he draws out the role of rationality in the emotions and emotional appeals. As Aristotle describes it, a speaker must appeal to the causal "premises" of an emotion. In the analysis of fear (2.5), for example, he identifies the premise as a threat that is likely and imminent. To evoke fear, a speaker must therefore present the idea that there is a probable, imminent danger. The audience has to assess such an appeal; if they accept the claim, they will believe that there is a threat, they will be afraid, and they will be more willing to act. A similar argument can be made regarding other elements of what Aristotle calls "elegant speech" (3.10-11). Regarding the metaphor, for instance, Aristotle praises it for being foreign enough to intrigue while still being clear enough for "quick learning," wherein two ideas are linked through a certain similarity. For the metaphor to have an effect, however, the audience must judge and accept its applicability. The point to stress regarding emotional appeals and other rhetorical devices is that the audience members are not objects that are controlled by the speaker; persuasion is not a passive experience

[148] See, for example, Todorov, Chaiken, & Henderson's (2002) discussion of the "Heuristic-Systematic Model" as it is used in persuasion, and Averbeck *et al*'s (2011) application of this model to fear appeals.

wherein the audience is simply acted upon by external forces. Rather, persuasion requires participation and judgment by the audience.

Because of his better understanding of choice and human rationality, Aristotle offers a more complete picture than bounded rationality of how rhetoric works. With that said, it is necessary to clarify the manner in which rhetoric engages rationality and how this relates to Aristotle's broader defense of rhetoric as a political art. I do not mean that rhetoric connects the audience to an objective rationality or truth. If that were the case, there would be little risk in the misuse of rhetoric: the rationally engaged audience would judge the soundness of an argument, and seeing matters as they actually are, they would identify lies and misrepresentations. Truth, then, would always have an edge over untruth in rhetoric, and one might accordingly defend rhetoric by saying that it is naturally allied with truth. This is Arnhart's (1981) interpretation of Aristotle's defense of rhetoric. For example, in the introduction to his commentary, he writes:

> although the rhetorical art in itself is a morally and epistemologically neutral instrument, rhetoric tends to serve the true and the just. […] Since speakers who display good character are more persuasive, the noble rhetorician has an advantage over the sophist, who must attempt to hide his bad character. […] With respect to the subject matter, it is generally the case that the true and the just are naturally more easily argued and more persuasive; and the opinions of the audience generally reflect this tendency. (p. 11)

The major reason that Arnhart links rhetoric with truth is that, while rhetoric must work within the scope of common opinions (*endoxa*), common opinions usually reflect a degree of truth. As he puts it, "whatever has become widely accepted among men is likely to contain some element of truth" (p. 25, cf. 183). Given this element of truth, Arnhart argues that rhetoric is stronger than sophistic speech:

> the actions of the sophist substantiate the veracity of common opinions, for his fallacious inferences consist not of reasoning from the common opinions of men, but rather of reasoning from what only *appear* to be common opinions or of reasoning to conclusions that *appear* to follow from common opinions when in fact they do not. While the rhetorician relies upon the commonsense understanding of men, the sophist runs contrary to it (p. 183).

I quote Arnhart at length on this issue because I agree with much of his commentary on the *Rhetoric*. In particular, he is very perceptive on the full character of the enthymeme and is importance within the *Rhetoric*. Nevertheless, I think he is overly credulous regarding the degree and strength of the truth in common opinion. It is correct that in the introduction to the *Rhetoric* Aristotle says, "things that are true and things that are just are by nature stronger than their opposites" (1355a21-22). But this is in the opening where he suggests that it should be enough to present one's case without relying on "extraneous" matters such as emotional appeals and artful arrangement. As I argued in Chapter 2, the opening of the *Rhetoric* has a highly rhetorical character, one that

corresponds with Aristotle's advice on introductions for defensive rhetoric (3.14). Aristotle uses the introduction to establish his character as one solely concerned with presenting truth, but as the work progresses, he relaxes this stringent position. Subsequently, he grants that, due to the character of general audiences and their inability to appreciate rational argument by itself, it is necessary to use the other aspects of rhetoric including emotional appeal and stylistic delivery.

Arnhart is also correct in saying that common opinions usually contain "some element of truth." The potential insight of common opinions is the reason they serve as the *starting* point for dialectical investigation. What must also be noted, however, is that common opinions usually contain errors and flaws. Furthermore, the people who adhere to common opinions do not themselves distinguish the truth from the errors in their opinions—to them, the entire opinion seems true. As Aristotle describes in the *Topics*, a rigorous effort of dialectic is required to identify errors and refine opinion. Most audience members will not have undertaken such an effort, nor would they even be capable of following advanced dialectical argument. Given the limits of the audience, it is difficult to believe that they will appreciate the truth when it is presented to them. Instead, they will expect arguments to accord with their flawed general opinions. For this reason, I do not think Aristotle rests his defense of rhetoric on the rational capacity of audiences to discern truth.

Rather, Aristotle has a more qualified defense of rhetoric. In many ways, it is enough to show that rhetoric is not necessarily sophistic or corrupting. As I have

mentioned, rhetoric had acquired a bad name in Greece due to its misuse by sophists who advertised they could teach people how to "make the weaker speech stronger." In the sophistic use of rhetoric, the speaker manipulates the audience, using emotional appeals and other stylistic devices to misdirect or impair their judgment. He might also simply pander to the audience members, encouraging them to act on immediate, ill-thought out opinions. In part, Aristotle provides a study of rhetoric in order to teach readers how to counteract sophistic uses of rhetoric (as he notes early on in the work at 1355a29-b2), but this is not the only beneficial use of rhetoric. In particular, rhetoric may also be required to support rational deliberation. Even if the common opinions of the audience are flawed, a rhetorician must rely on these opinions in order to present his case in a manner that the audience can follow. Similarly, a speaker might use rhetorical devices to guide the listeners' attention, putting ideas clearly "before their eyes" so that they can appreciate concerns that might otherwise seem distant or difficult to understand. While rhetoric can be used to mislead an audience, it can also be used to aid their reasoning and guide them to conclusions that they would not be able to reach by themselves. One can thus defend rhetoric by arguing that it is a neutral art that can be put to a beneficial use. Beyond that, one cannot give a more absolute defense—instead, one must judge particular cases and instances of rhetorical speech, considering how rhetoric is used and what end the audience is guided towards.

To be sure, this is a limited defense of rhetoric, but it corresponds to the limits of rhetoric itself. Within the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle does not directly discuss the limitations of rhetoric as an art, but he does offer some important suggestions. Most notably, rhetoric is

limited by the particular audience. Because rhetoric is not simply a matter of presenting truth, the rhetorician must work within the common opinions that the audience accepts. Certain societies will have better opinions to draw on than others, and even if there are salutary opinions in the cultural tradition, the audience must know them well enough to follow an argument that appeals to these opinions. More broadly, the audience must be willing to listen to speech and attend to arguments. As Polemarchus playfully warns Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, "Do you have the power to persuade if we do not listen?" (327e). The limits imposed by the audience suggest that the power of rhetoric is dependent on the resources available in a political society, both the character of the people and the quality of the opinions they hold. Another limit of rhetoric is that there is no guidance within the art itself as to how rhetoric should be used, what opinions are worth appealing to, or where the audience should be guided. Rhetoric requires guidance if it is to be used beneficially.

Rhetoric is a limited art, but to the extent that Aristotle offers a broader defense of rhetoric, it is in his guidance on how rhetoric can be used to refine common opinion. For the most part, this is not the role of rhetoric. Common opinions are instilled by general experience and early moral education; subsequently they may be modified through further education and investigation. Rhetoric, however, is not education and it cannot have the rigor of dialectic, so it is limited in its capacity to appeal outside of common opinion. Instead, rhetoric must largely work *within* commonly accepted notions, appealing to premises that the audience already accepts. To the extent that the public can recognize truth as such or at least recognize general improvements in opinion, there may

be a degree to which a speaker can challenge public opinion and simply present new alternatives. Otherwise, the speaker will have to justify policies and ideas in light of premises already accepted by common opinion. For example, in Chapter 2, I discussed American speeches that appeal to the "self-evident truths" of the *Declaration of Independence*. In the *Gettysburg Address*, Lincoln appealed to the founding ideals not only to praise the sacrifice of the fallen, but also to rally the nation by making clear that the civil war was not just a war between the states as many saw it; rather, he presented the war as a struggle to defend the fundamental idea of the *Declaration* ("the proposition that all men are created equal") and thereby determine whether a government committed to that idea "can long endure." Similarly, civil rights leaders such as Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King Jr. appealed to the *Declaration* in order to justify the abolition and anti-segregation movements in terms of the American revolutionary commitment to freedom and equality.

It is important to note that while rhetoric is largely limited to common opinion, this limitation is also what provides it with its unique power or opportunity for leadership. By working within common opinions and within the limited capacities of the audience, a speaker can lead the listeners from their initial views and he can attain broader agreement than by using rational argument alone. Furthermore, by relying on common opinions, the speaker can apply these opinions in new ways. Aristotle makes

this point, albeit somewhat elliptically, when discussing the rhetorical use of maxims (which are short, weighty-sounding generalizations).[149] He says,

> Maxims have one great benefit in speeches, which comes from the crudeness [or, vulgarity: φορτικότητα] of the audience members, since they are delighted when someone speaking in universal terms hits upon opinions that they themselves hold for a particular case. … For a maxim is a universal declaration, as was said, and people are delighted when something they already happen to assume about a particular case is stated universally. (1395b1-7)

There are different ways of understanding the "crudeness" of the listeners and their "delight." Most immediately, the passage suggests that there is a degree of flattery at work: the audience members are pleased because their opinions are being affirmed by the speaker. Indeed, one might say more generally that there is a degree of flattery involved with the rhetorical reliance on common opinions, because such reliance suggests that the opinions are a sufficient basis for deliberation. Again, however, it is important to consider how the opinions are used and what end the audience is guided towards. On this note, it is important to recognize the inductive language that Aristotle uses in the quoted passage:

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[149] An example of a rhetorical maxim that Aristotle gives is, "The saying 'nothing too much' does not please me, for *one cannot hate evils too much*" (1395a32-33). This form of maxim was used by Barry Goldwater in his 1964 Republican convention speech: "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice; moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."

he suggests that the speaker expands on the listeners' thought, extending their particular views into a more general observation. That is, whereas the audience had only grasped particulars, the speaker is able to go further, drawing these observations into a more universal claim.[150] The "delight" in this case would be the pleasure of "quick learning" that Aristotle often refers to (e.g. 1371a31, 1410b10), a pleasure that is felt as the listeners are able to understand a point that builds on their own experience. There might still be a degree of flattery if the audience members think they are responsible for the insight—but the important point regarding rhetoric is that the speaker is able to select certain views and extend the reasoning of the audience, applying their opinions in new ways. To relate this point regarding the extension of common opinion back to the theory of bounded rationality, it is not enough to say that political rhetoric involves framing issues in particular ways or directing the audience's attention to certain points over others. The speaker can also look to implicit assumptions and draw out the potential implications of common opinions, appealing to the audience members' judgment in order to extend their reasoning.

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[150] In his lectures on the *Rhetoric*, Leo Strauss (1964) comments on this passage: "[The orator] expresses universally what they sense particularly in the case at hand. They could not express it universally and they get it then from him. … The crudity of the hearers is crucial. They cannot express generally what they think or feel in the particular case. And therefore this is where the orator comes in: He can say what they only sense" (Lecture X.15-16, 1:14:00 ff.). Arnhart (1981) makes a similar point: "Even the person unable to generalize from his particular experiences is pleased by the generalizations of a rhetorician; such a person delights to have what he only vaguely senses in particular cases raised to the level of a universal principle" (p.146).

One can most readily see this capacity to extend common opinion in speeches that invoke fundamental political commitments. In the American examples above, one can say at the very least that Lincoln and the civil rights leaders sought to remind audiences of the original meaning of the *Declaration* and thereby correct subsequent corruption of that meaning. One could go further, however, and say that in these instances, the speaker highlights certain elements while minimizing dissonant aspects of the historical founding. The effect of such a selective focus is to reinforce and even expand on certain opinions over others. In this regard, it is worth noting that Wills (1992) identifies the *Gettysburg Address* as a "new founding" (p. 39) and an effort of "correcting the Constitution itself without overthrowing it" (p. 147):

> [Lincoln] altered the document from within, by appeal from its letter to the spirit, subtly changing the recalcitrant stuff of that legal compromise, bringing it to its own indictment. By implicitly doing this, he performed one of the most daring acts of open-air sleight-of-hand ever witnessed by the unsuspecting. … The crowd departed with a new thing in its ideological luggage, that new constitution Lincoln had substituted for the one they brought there with them. (p. 38)

In other nations where democratic institutions are more recent developments, leaders might seek to bolster liberalism by linking it with ideas already respected in the cultural tradition. For example, in his studies of constitutionalism in India and Israel, Jacobsohn describes the efforts of judicial leaders to present liberal democracy as "a reaffirmation

and continuance" of the tolerance found in Hinduism (2009, p. 207) and "consonant with the vision of the prophets of Israel" (1993, p. 69). The rhetorical effort in such cases is not only to justify new ideals by a selective appeal to the old, but also to adapt traditional ideals to a new context. There is thus some room to challenge the audience by appealing to and seeking to refine fundamental opinions, though the rhetorician will be limited by the opinions that can be found within the political society.

One might also see rhetorical refinement of common opinion in certain forms of philosophical writing. On this point, recall that Aristotle opens the *Rhetoric* by calling rhetoric the counterpart or *antistrophe* of dialectic. *Antistrophe* is a dramatic term regarding the chorus in a Greek play: in the *strophe*, the chorus dances in one direction while delivering its message, and in the *antistrophe*, the chorus returns across the stage, following the same metric pattern. To apply the metaphor: whereas dialectic moves away from public views, refining flawed opinions, rhetoric can be used to return to the public and introduce the discoveries of dialectic. I argued in Chapter 2 that this opening statement is part of an idealistic account of rhetoric that Aristotle subsequently qualifies. However, to see how rhetoric could serve as an *antistrophe*, one might look to the rhetorical character of Aristotle's own writing.

This rhetorical character is most clearly highlighted in a series of methodological remarks Aristotle makes early on in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. First, he notes the lack of precision he will use, saying that when speaking on the good, noble, and just things, "one must be content… to show the truth roughly and in outline" (1094b19-20). He further

suggests that his discussion will be closer to a persuasive account offered by a "skilled rhetorician" than a demonstration by a mathematician (1094b26-27). Secondly, Aristotle indicates that the primary audience will be mature, morally serious gentlemen who have been "brought up nobly by means of convention concerning the noble things, just things, and political things generally" (1095b4-5). Moreover, he says that he will be working within the accepted beliefs of these men: the starting point or first principle for his discussion will be what they find manifestly evident such that there will be no need to explain "the why" concerning these principles (1095b7). Aristotle's use of this limited standard can be seen throughout his discussion of the virtues as he continually focuses on what is commonly praised and blamed.[151]

None of these comments on the limited precision of the *Ethics* or its primary intended audience are meant to deny the philosophic importance of the work. On the contrary, the *Ethics*, along with the *Politics*, offers what Aristotle calls a "philosophic inquiry concerning human things" (1181b15). There is a deeper teaching available for readers who demand more precision, ask questions regarding "the why," and pursue the puzzles Aristotle embeds in his discussion. In its immediate presentation, however, the *Ethics* is a dialectical inquiry that is contained within rhetorical limits, meaning that while Aristotle examines, clarifies, and expands upon conventional moral opinions, he

[151] For an extended discussion of the "methodological digressions" in the *Ethics*, as well as Aristotle's broader rhetorical strategy, see Pangle (2011 and 2013, especially pp. 9-46).

ultimately upholds and reinforces refined versions of those opinions.[152] In light of this philosophic rhetoric, one might say that while the *Rhetoric* offers a general teaching concerning how rhetoric works, Aristotle offers his highest defense of rhetoric in his other works where he shows how rhetoric can best be paired with philosophy.

Exploring the potential and limits of philosophic rhetoric would require a much more extensive study of Aristotle's other works and the rhetoric he uses therein. Similarly, a study of the role of rhetoric in the highest forms of political guidance would also need to take place in a larger examination of politics, including considerations of education and law. This is to say that to grasp Aristotle's full teaching on rhetoric, one would have to go beyond the *Rhetoric* itself, relating the lessons of the *Rhetoric* to the broader political teaching found in the Aristotelian *corpus*. In terms of the current study, however, my focus was on the *Rhetoric* itself and the psychology of persuasion. My goals were to explore Aristotle's teaching on the character of human rationality, examine the place of rationality in rhetoric so as to defend the use of rhetoric, and demonstrate the enduring relevance of Aristotle's thought to political science. Having done so, I will apply Aristotle's final words in the *Rhetoric*. He says that after showing that one's promises have been kept, a speaker should conclude with simple, direct words:

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[152] Pangle (2013) characterizes Aristotle's "didactic rhetoric" as having a "winnowing effect," wherein some few readers are lead to "clarified and rigorously consistent thinking," while other readers are left "at various suitably stable and beneficial levels of partial understanding" (pp. 45-46).

εἴρηκα, ἀκηκόατε, ἔχετε, κρίνατε.

I have spoken, you have listened, you have it, judge.

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